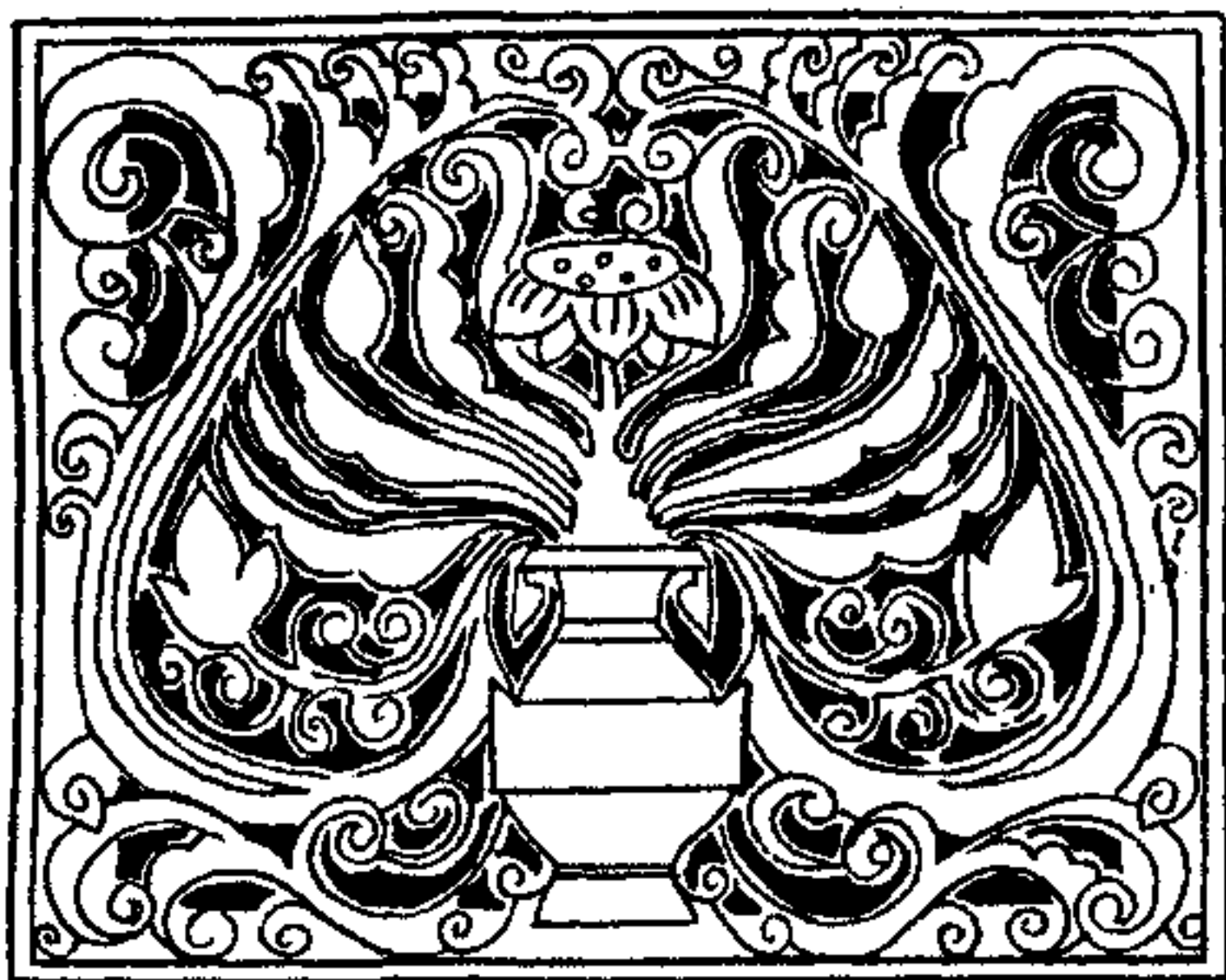




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from Nepal

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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 101

SEPTEMBER 1996

No. 9

Divine Wisdom

TO REALIZE THE DIVINE

(Sage Kapila's advice to his mother Devahūti)

अनिमित्तनिमित्तेन स्वधर्मेणामलात्मना।
तीव्रया मयि भक्त्या च श्रुतसम्भृतया चिरम्॥

ज्ञानेन दृष्टतत्त्वेन वैराग्येण बलीयसा।
तपोयुक्तेन योगेन तीव्रेणात्मसमाधिना॥

प्रकृतिः पुरुषस्येह दह्यमाना त्वहर्निशम्।
तिरोभवित्री शनकैरग्नेर्योनिरिवारणिः॥

The oppressive bondage of the Purusha by the Prakriti (Nature) (through body-mind) can be destroyed by *sādhana* or spiritual discipline practised with the help of the body-mind itself. As a fire lit with the help of fuel destroys that very fuel, so spiritual discipline practised with the help of the body-mind gradually destroys that very

body-mind, the product of Nature, by which the soul is held in bondage. Some of these disciplines may be cited as follows: One must perform one's duties (*svadharma*) without any motive other than the service of God through it. One must cultivate purity in body and mind. Through hearing, reading and meditating on the Lord's excellences all through life, one must cultivate an intense love for Him. One must seek Knowledge, which is of the nature of actual experience of Truth. One must have intense dispassion for worldly objects and ambitions. One must practise concentration supported by moral disciplines and spiritual aspiration. One must intensely seek absorption in the Divine.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.27.21–3

Idolatry?

We were a bit disconcerted by the style and content of some writings a couple of months ago in a number of newspapers and journals on two important aspects of Hinduism—image-worship and her scriptures. While most of the articles either cartooned the deities or ridiculed worship of their images, one report announced the ‘weighty’ conclusion of some ‘study’—that many Hindu scriptures prescribed the use of intoxicants in religious practices; that hence they impart a general sanctity to intoxicants etc. per se; and that this is the main reason why drugs etc. have increasingly become an item of use in the daily life also of the common man.

Unbelievably, this report it appears has been submitted to the Indian government. We hope that the government, before it accepts the recommendations of the ‘study’, realizes that the motives behind this particular conclusion are pernicious. For, certainly they are based on very shallow surveys by people having little knowledge of the scope of the Hindu scriptures or of the contexts in which the use of stimulants or intoxicants are mentioned.

The news-items, ridiculous as they were, also surprised us. For, we were under the impression that the writings and utterances of Swami Vivekananda and others on Hinduism and related subjects had cleared such false notions circulated by many westerners and Christian Missionaries and echoed by some Indian ‘rationalists’ enjoying foreign pappings.

In any case, we had ignored the matter.

But when we found a few visitors here raising questions based on those news-items, we felt that a published answer is necessary—for the benefit of a larger number of people in whose minds too doubts might have arisen. Because, such doubts weaken one’s spiritual energies and faith. Much more than this, in the case of a lay person those doubts lead to the loosening of one’s cultural roots, to a diffusion of the cohesive force in one’s individuality—to a feeling of inadequacy in oneself. At a deeper level it dries up or blocks one’s cultural originality and creativity. The cumulative bad effect is of course on the whole nation.

We shall try to answer the question of Hindu religion and alcoholism etc. in a later number. Taking up the first now, we shall simply cite an example of the profundity of thought behind Hindu religious symbolism and image-worship. (By the by, the word ‘image’ is far more appropriate than ‘idol’.) Thereby people may get a better understanding and also be alert to protest immediately whenever such tasteless belittling of Hindu deities occurs in newspapers or advertisements. In fact, people should start a movement to stop the use of the likenesses of deities on commercial items. For example, is there any sincere religious motive, much less art, behind the use of a picture of Lord Ganesha on a *bidi*-packet?

We should remember that Hindu symbolism is in every case in harmony with its core philosophy and the highest realization, viz. Advaita: that the source of all creation is divine non-dual Consciousness, Brahman; that since effect and cause are always non-

different in essence though different in form, the ultimate nature, or the basic building material, so to say, of every single entity in this cosmos is Consciousness.

Secondly, this symbolism is in perfect agreement with two of the guiding principles of Hinduism—one, the highest goal in life a human being can and should choose is God-realization or the discovering of the true nature of one's personality, i.e. Consciousness; two, a religious symbol, as an object of worship or of contemplation, is an aid in the pursuit of this goal for those who find abstract self-analysis difficult or impossible. These symbols help raise our minds to higher and distinctly sacred mental states. This is because symbols represent spiritual truths or principles underlying things or thoughts at their various finer levels.

For instance, the *swastika* represents the cosmic cyclic order; a Shiva-linga stands for God or Brahman as a pillar or column of divine light; more tangibly, the sound of *Om* represents the continuous process of cosmic creation, existence and dissolution; more graspably, a very beautiful image of God, capable of holding our attention and drawing it away from worldly beauty, stands for some particular aspect of Brahman—love or knowledge or power, and so on.

Surely, those who wish to realize Brahman can meditate on It as Sat-Chit-Ananda, which method is very very abstract and possible only for a rare few. So, for others another method is advised, which is, easier: meditate on Brahman as *Tajjalān*. What is that? Meditate on It as *taj-ja-la-an*. That is, meditate on *tat*, That, Brahman, as that from which this universe has been born (*ja*, i.e. *jāyate*), that in which this universe merges (*la*, i.e. *liyate*), and that in which it, after being created, moves, exists, lives (*an*, i.e. *aniti*).¹

1. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, 3.14.1.

By regular practice, after due self-training through moral conduct, of this or similar meditations one realizes Brahman.

No, you find that also too abstract and difficult? Well then, try through meditation on or regular ritualistic worship of, say, Lord Viṣṇu—the supreme God who creates and nourishes this creation, and finally also withdraws it into Himself. (Notice the similarity of these attributes with what *tajjalān* suggests. Besides, the word *viṣṇu* derivatively means He who is all-pervading.) He is in reality a form of or a certain state of the divine Consciousness, perceived from a particular level of human consciousness. Not an artist's creation, or a sculptor's imagination. So, by meditating on or worshipping Viṣṇu too in the proper way one can expand one's limited individual consciousness, little by little, to flood it with a semblance of the illimitable Consciousness that Brahman is.

Now, how exactly is the Viṣṇu symbolism in harmony with Advaita and its philosophy? We know this from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.28.21–33; 12.11.1–26). There Lord Viṣṇu is referred to as *kevala*, pure non-dual Consciousness. His abode is *Vai-kunṭha*, a place or state that is without (*vai*, i.e. *vi*) sorrow, darkness, sin, ugliness (*kunṭha*). Ādi-śeṣa, the serpent on which He rests, is the primordial (*ādi*) residue (*śeṣa*), or the potent state, of the previous cycle of creation; it is *Prakṛti* (the *pra*, prior, *kṛti*, condition, the causal condition) out of which the new cycle of cosmic creation occurs. The lotus on which He is seen standing or sitting represents the *sattva-guṇa* which is characterized by morality, wisdom, etc. His vehicle, which conveys Him to us, gives us an idea about Him who is transcendent, is *Garuda*, i.e. the *Vedas*. His form is of the essence of Sat-Chit-Ananda. The two earrings stand for *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, the spiritual disciplines through which He is reached. The ornament *Kaustabha* on his

neck signifies the *jīva* or individual consciousness which is dependent on Him for its existence. The floral wreath, *Vanamālā*, around His neck is His *māyā* shakti and its three *gunas* and their various evolutes. His brilliant yellow garment stands for the Vedic metres or *Chandas*. The three strands (*Brahma-sūtra*, *yajñopavīta*) around His chest and over the shoulder symbolizes the three-syllabled *Om*. The mace, *Kaumodaki*, stands for *Prāṇa*, the energy that regulates the life of the cosmos. The lotus He playfully holds in His hand symbolizes His divine majesties. His bow, *Sāranga*, is Time; the quiver the storehouse of karma, works of creatures; and the arrows the organs of creatures, which He shoots in due time, i.e. acti-

vates, impels, guides to their targets, objects, to fulfil their purpose, functions. And so on.

Similarly with the images of other deities. There is a spiritual significance in every aspect of an image—form, posture, expression in the eyes, position of the hands and fingers, etc. We may or may not understand or accept all of that. But in any case we have no business to shake the faith of others, imagining that we are superior or scientific. If we really wish to educate others, we should ourselves know better and then share our knowledge with them. Lift others from where they are, instead of taking away their foundation without giving them insight or a positive alternative. □

The Buddha understood that Rahula (his son) was ripe to receive certain teachings. He said, 'Rahula, learn from the earth. Whether people spread pure and fragrant flowers, perfume, or fresh milk on it, or discard filthy and foul-smelling faeces, urine, blood, mucus, and spit on it, the earth receives it all equally without clinging or aversion. When pleasant or unpleasant thoughts arise, don't let them entangle or enslave you.

'Learn from the water, Rahula. When people wash dirty things in it, the water is not sad or disdainful. Learn from fire. Fire burns all things without discrimination. It is not ashamed to burn impure substances. Learn from the air. The air carries all fragrances whether sweet or foul.

'Rahula, practice loving kindness to overcome anger. Loving kindness has the capacity to bring happiness to others without demanding anything in return. Practice compassion to overcome cruelty. Compassion has the capacity to remove the suffering of others without expecting anything in return. Practice sympathetic joy to overcome hatred. Sympathetic joy arises when one rejoices over the happiness of others and wishes others' well-being and success. Practice non-attachment at all things openly and equally. This is because that is. This is because that is. Myself and other are not separate. Do not reject one thing only to chase after another.

'Rahula, loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and non-attachment are beautiful and profound states of mind. I call them the Four Immeasurables. Practice them and you will become a refreshing source of vitality and happiness for others.'

—Thich Nhat Hanh, *Old Path White Clouds*, p. 321

The Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म ततोऽन्नमभिजायते।
अन्नात्प्राणो मनः सत्यं लोकाः कर्मसु चामृतम्॥

*Tapasā ciyate brahma.
tato'nnam-abhijāyate;
Annāt-prāṇo manah satyaṁ
lokāḥ karmasu cāmṛtam. (I.i.8)*

Through austerity Brahman increases in size. From that is produced (the unmanifested) food. From food evolves prāṇa—life-breath (Hiranyagarbha); thence the (Cosmic) Mind; thence the truth (the five elements); (thence) the worlds; (thence) the immortality too in karmas (works).

Now are given the details of how Brahman, which is Consciousness, has taken such a tangible, diverse form in which there is no sign of that Consciousness, and because of which, in fact, scientists have been misled to say that this creation is animate and inanimate. The latter they call dead matter, and the former they say is a living entity. However, the Upaniṣadic philosopher says that in the ultimate analysis the cosmos is nothing but Consciousness.

On hearing Sri Ramakrishna's discourse that everything was Consciousness, Narendranath sarcastically remarked that it was too much to swallow that even the earthen pot, the wooden cot and such other objects are all Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna overheard this and laughed, and instead of arguing, touched him in a mood of divine ecstasy and lifted him to a level where he could feel the whole world to be *caitanyamaya* (filled with Consciousness). This

feeling continued for three days and three nights, and he was for the time being devoid of 'normal' perception. However, in our case we have to use our rational understanding to prepare ourselves to understand the teacher's view point.

Tapasyā is a willed desire to do something. For that, one has to possess: (1) a clear conception of and desire for what one wants to do (*jñāna* and *icchā*); (2) the ability to procure materials to perform it (*śakti*); (3) finally, the capacity, the perseverance and the determination to do it (*kriyā*). Brahman, with the desire, '*eko'ham bahusyām prajāyeya*—I am alone, I shall become many', created this cosmos. In a way beyond our understanding, the abstract, absolute Entity gets into a condition in which It has the desire and the will to produce. It becomes full of activities, like an agitated ocean, on account of Its will and desire. *Upacīyate* means to soften, swell, enlarge and sprout. Śaṅkarācārya, in another place, gives the example of germinating seeds: first, a handful of grains are immersed in water for twenty-four hours to soften and swell them so that they get ready to sprout.

The sequence of creation follows thus: The desire to become many is the root cause of everything, all this diversity. Then Brahman creates the basic material of subsistence, *annam*, food for this cosmos. To Brahman, this *annam* is this *Prakṛti*, or Nature, just as *annam*, or what we eat, is the basic material for our subsistence. From this subsistence-material of the cosmos evolves *prāṇa*, the basic life-principle of all forms of

life. In animate objects the life-principle which animates them comes from this life-force or Hiranyagarbha.

From *prāṇa* comes *manas*, mind. The mind is individual in every name-form, but that individual mind really is a spark of the Cosmic Mind. Then comes *sat*. The gross (*sat*) and the subtle (*tyat*) is the grammatical meaning of *satyam* here. From *prāṇa* (energy) and *manas* (mind) come the subtle and the gross things of the world in the form of the subtle five elements and their manifestations in gross form through permutation and combination. Thus, from *satyam* comes, in mythological language, the *bhūh-loka*, *bhuvaḥ-loka*, *svarloka*, and other *lokas* (worlds).

But in a subtler sense the *lokas* are the various levels of awareness in man. One, though human, may live a beastly life, not aware of better things. Thus there are the *paśuloka*, *pretaloka*, *dānavaloka*, *gandharvaloka*, *manuṣyaloka* and *devaloka*, from the lowest to the highest level. From the gross to the subtle are these levels of consciousness. Out of these levels of awareness corresponding achievements or *karmas* follow. All animate objects have to act, because life is activity; but at a higher level of consciousness as of human beings, we in the *manuṣyaloka*, have to perform a class of activities called *duties* of life. Activities, unfailingly, give results (*karma-phala*) which in turn prompt further activity. And this is an endless chain.

So this is the Upaniṣadic cosmology. However this is only the *vāc्यārtha*, the literal meaning. The *lakṣyārtha*, or suggestive meaning, is that there is nothing else but Brahman. All that is said about creation is to draw us away from our present dualistic state of consciousness to the monistic state. It is to remove dualistic understanding from our mind and bring it to perceive Oneness that the Upaniṣad is hypothetically giving

the details of cosmology. The teacher starts from the premise of an 'as if'-creation that is only relatively true but not ultimately true. As such it is within our understanding and thus the sequence of creation has a place and utility. Creation is not like *badara-muṣṭi prakṣepa*¹ but is fully planned and designed by a supreme Intelligence that permeates Its cosmos. The teacher is only giving the sequence of creation for the apparently real universe for our present understanding.

यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद्यस्य ज्ञानमयं तपः।
तस्मादेतद्ब्रह्म नाम रूपमन्नं च जायते॥

Yah sarvajñāḥ sarva-vid-
yasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ;
Tasmād-etad-brahma
nāma rūpam-annam ca jāyate. (I.i.9)

He who is all-knowing (omniscient) in general and all-knowing (all-wise) in detail, and whose austerity consists of knowledge, produces this (derivative) Brahman, name, form and food.

Rooted in our present state of awareness, however, we do not accept that all we see is a figment of our imagination. Though we agree that in the seeing of an illusory snake in the rope, the snake never existed in the past, does not exist in the present, and will never exist in the future in its substratum, the rope, yet for a time we are possessed by the strong snake-illusion, which changes our whole behavioural pattern. This snake-illusion though contradicted and removed in a short time, within our lifetime, the super-imposition of the cosmos on Brahman is not contradicted (or removed even)

(Continued on page 530)

1. *Badara*, jujube fruit. The phrase implies that creation has occurred not by chance or in a haphazard manner as in the scattering of a fistful of *badara* thrown without forethought, impulsively, by a person.

Nanda, The Pariah Saint

(Continued from the previous issue)

As soon as Nanda awoke from his holy trance, he prostrated himself before the brāhmin crowd, that had gathered about him and began with his friends to go round the village once again. It so happened that, while thus going round, a certain brāhmin Pundit was reciting before a large audience Chidambarapurānam (the story of Chidambaram)¹ from the pial of one of the corner-most houses of the brāhmin quarters. As Nanda passed along, he heard the brāhmin say, 'Chidambaram is the holiest place in all the world; he that once visits the temple there, be he a Chandāla (outcaste), crosses once and for ever the ocean of births and deaths'; and then followed an eloquent description of the temple and the inner meaning of its grand symbolism.

Indeed in point of tradition, Chidambaram is one of the richest cities in the world. What Palestine was for the Christians, what Mecca is to the Muhammedans, what Śrīrangam is to the Vaishnavites (the worshippers of Vishnu), that Chidambaram is to the Śaivite portion of the Hindu community. It is one of the five great places of worship in Southern India, in each of which, God is represented as one of the five elements. There the representation is as Ākāśa (ether), the first of the five elements. The idea of worshipping the elements as God is essentially Vedic, and is a great help in the finding out and practical recognition of the divinity in the universe—which latter, when examined is seen to be nothing but a physico-

chemical compound of these elements. In a higher sense, the Ākāśa worshipped at Chidambaram is not the ether of the scientists, but the spaceless, timeless, unconditioned sphere of the Self. The very name Chidambaram means the Ākāśa of wisdom, and the temple there is called the *Koīl*—the temple *par excellence*. In the centre of that temple there is a gold-tiled *mantapam* called the *chitsaba*—the hall of wisdom, in which is to be seen first the image of Natarāja, and then what is known as the *Rahasya* (the secret)—representing of course the secret of all secrets, the characterless Nirvāṇa of the Self. Of all the anthropomorphic representations of the deity yet known to man, that as Natarāja is one of the very best, and the image at Chidambaram, which is the prototype of all similar images elsewhere, is certainly one of the most inspiring figures that I have known. Even considered as purely a work of art, there are few images more faultless, more lifelike and more charming. That soft curly hair tufted like that of a *dikshitar* (a priest of that temple), the long prominent nose, those eyes so full of life and expression, that face in which dignity, bliss and mercy speak out and dance, the natural bend of the arms and their ornaments, that beautiful attitude of the dancer seeing which one fancies that the figure is really dancing, and lastly, that raised foot (*kunjidapāda*) so eminently inspiring, are before me as I write. And when to the artistic appreciation of the image is joined a full understanding of its idea, its inner poetry—that from the noise of the *damaruka* (a little drum) held in one of the right hands, innumerable worlds are represented as rushing forth into life as sparks

1. In the South Arcot District, Madras Presidency.

from fire, as bubbles from a spring (*Śabda Nishtam Jagat*—the world sprang out of, and stands by sound or vibration); that the other right hand expressive of the idea 'be it so', represents the power which maintains those worlds under a great unerring and faultless law; that the fire in one of the left hands, represents the mighty and mysterious power of destruction, which makes the stars, mountains and oceans 'the perfume and suppliance of minute'; that the firmly planted right leg indicates the power of the mystery that refuses to clear up the thick manifold veil of illusive panorama which hides the truth from us for ages together; and that, lastly, the raised foot symbolizes the grace of God, which shelters and saves those that seek it from the eternal, infinite, and terribly deceiving drama of creation, existence and destruction—it is no wonder, that men like Appar, Mānickar, Pattanathār and Thāyumānavar (these are some of the great Śaivite saints of the Tamil land) forgot in that Presence the petty commercial prose of our daily life, and broke forth in the highest, the most philosophical, and the most impassioned poetry that the Tamil language has known. The idea of ecstatic dance symbolized in the beautiful image of Natarāja—the great unseen manager of the drama of the world, has been the most popular one with the non-Vaishnavite poets and philosophers of the South. To them, wherever an atom moves, and the world means constant motion, there Natarāja dances. In the play of the child, the mirth of women, the war of nations, the rolling of the stars, in earthquakes, conflagrations and deluges, in the water drop as much as in the cataract, Natarāja is dancing—eternally and blissfully dancing. To the Vedantin, whom nothing less than the highest will satisfy, the conception of Natarāja means the all-pervading Atman, through whose power all the world presents the vision of life and activity; and the dance signifies the ecstatic condition of the soul that has triumphed over the

terrible illusion of the world and the inner enemies of anger, lust, etc. And it is under the inspiration of this great philosophical conception that the venerable sage Thāyumānavar has poured forth most of his sublime Upanishad-like utterances. One particular feature in the story of Chidambaram is that Patanjali and Vyāgrapāda both attained to the Presence of Natarāja—the one by his Yoga, the other by his Bhakti—a grand recognition of the truth that both Bhakti and Yoga lead, each in its own way, to the same goal. To express, even more strongly, this most important of truths—that all religions and religious methods are only different paths for approaching God—in the same temple and within a few yards of Natarāja's shrine, there is that of Śree Govinda Raja Perumal; and Chidambaram is one of the most important places of pilgrimage for the Vaishnavites also.

Nanda passed and heard the whole story of Chidambaram from the eloquent lips of the brāhmin reciter. It acted on him like magic. The words, Chidambaram and Natarāja, obtained a strange mastery over him. He became eager to visit Chidambaram, which was not very far off, that very night, and was with great difficulty dissuaded from his object by his companions. 'The temple at Chidambaram would be closed,' they said, 'before you reach it and, besides, you are a slave to your brāhmin master, you should not forget your position so easily. We have already stayed away too long and it will be dangerous to do so longer.' A lesser man in that situation might have been provoked to reply, 'Is that brāhmin greater than God? I care not for him. I shall have my own way.' But Nanda meekly replied, 'Yes, you are right. It has pleased God to place me in the situation of a bondsman. He knows what is good for me, infinitely better than I do. To resign myself to His will, is even a higher worship than visit his temple. I shall fall at the feet of my brāh-

min master, please him in all honest ways and, I am sure, he will sooner or later allow me to go to Chidambaram.' So saying he returned home with his companions, but not before he had dug out with their assistance a tank, still pointed out as his, for the use of the people of Tirupunkoor. The feat was regarded as wonderful, and the idea of a few *pariahs* joining together and creating a tank was an altogether novel one, so much so that popular tradition attributes the work to God Ganeśa, who did it in order to please his father Śiva's devotee. The truth is, love works wonders and Nanda's love was of a very high order; it was not like that of some people who go into the temple with plenty of offerings to God—coconuts, plantain fruits, etc., but would not give a pie to the beggar at the temple gate. In Nanda's eyes all men were God's Children, and to serve them was itself a kind of worship, higher even than supplying temple-drums with leather or making offerings to God. After digging and completing the tank he and his companions returned home.

Henceforth it became the one passion of Nanda's life to visit the great temple of Natarāja. Day and night he would pant for it. While working in the fields, while staying at home, while laying himself down to sleep, always his mind was with the great God dancing as it were the unceasing dance of creation, destruction and maintenance. Every day he would think of begging his master to let him go to Chidambaram, but day after day passed without his venturing to do so, for fear of a refusal. He would tell his friends every day, 'I go to Chidambaram tomorrow'. But a great many tomorrows became todays and he had not gone: he became a veritable 'dupe of tomorrow' and his very friends began to nickname him 'one that goes tomorrow' (Tirunālaipovār).

In the meantime, the *pariah* community of Adhanūr, among whom true *bhakti* (devo-

tion) was a thing altogether unknown, observed, first with curiosity and then with alarm, the change that was coming over Nanda. The constant repetition of the holy name of Śiva, the frequent besmearing of the body with sacred ashes, the exercises of meditation, in which he was often engaged, and more even than these, the thorough change that had come over the inner man, his extreme meekness and humility, his constant and involuntary references to God, his inability to talk of anything but Him and His glory, his self-absorption even in the midst of work, caused real uneasiness in the minds of his ignorant kinsmen, to whom any kind of deviation from the accustomed run of life was a source of fear. He would seldom mix in the cruel and barbarous sports of his community; meat and toddy lost their sway over him. Butchery was an act of abomination in his eyes, and he discouraged it whenever he had occasion. Often while the rest of the community was engaged in quarrel or gossip, he would unconcernedly repose under some tree and meditate: he would look at the wonderful creation around him, admire the unceasing miracles of the universe—plants, rivers, mountains, trees, etc., and say, 'Ah, all this deceptive phenomenal wealth is the glory of that one foot of Natarāja so firmly planted down. Beautiful as all this is, let me, O God, cross over to you and see you not as you seem, but as you are.' Then he would fix his mind on the raised foot of Natarāja and pray with eyes filled with tears to be sheltered under its blissful shade of wisdom. One day Nanda had long sat meditating in this way till his eyes were suffused with tears of joy and himself passed into a state of ecstatic trance, when a curious neighbour went near him, and finding him unconscious and his body wetted with tears, gave the alarm to the whole community that something was wrong with Nanda. The report found ready acceptance on all sides, and soon our poor friend was rudely shaken and disturbed and was at once demanded an

explanation. But all that he could say was, 'Knowing that there is a God, who can help worshipping Him?', which of course was not found satisfactory. The result was that a council was at once formed on the spot, and it was unanimously resolved by the wise of the community that Nanda's malady was due to the fault of not having held feasts for their gods more frequently, and that therefore one should be celebrated the very next day.

Grand were the preparations that were made for the feast. A huge *pandal* (shed) was erected and decorated with plantain trees, coconuts, mango leaves and flags. Fowls and sheep were procured in abundance for sacrifice. A Valluva priest of oracular fame was called in, and grotesque clay figures of the mighty gods of wonderful names—*Veeran*, *Irulan*, *Kātterī*, *Veryan*, *Nandi*, *Chāmundi*, *Nallakarupan*, *Pettannan*, *Pavadi* and a multitude of others too numerous to be mentioned here were made. The next morning, the whole village gathered together under the *pandal*. The claygods were arranged in order of importance. Fowls and sheep and pots of toddy were ready for the feast. Nanda was held by main force, for which however there was no need, in the centre of the assembly, and the high priest Valluvanar shook his *damarukam* (a little drum). And at once there was a wild blowing of horns and a reckless beating of 'drums and timbrels loud' and, as soon as they stopped, the holy priest got inspired; god had descended unto him, and he rose making all sorts of hideous cries. About ten people held him down, perhaps to prevent his escape to heaven. Thus held down, and shaking forth his *damarukam*, he delivered with appropriate gestures the following oracular utterances. 'Nandan,' he said, 'Nandan—Nandan—Nandan—is possessed with the big long-haired devil which resides in the market tamarind tree. It will make him laugh and weep and run and talk

and sleep' (many people do these things without the help of the devil), and he asked, 'Does he not do all these?', to which there was a tumultuous reply of, 'aye, aye, how true the oracle, how right!' Nanda said nothing but thought within himself, 'O Lord, how wonderful is Thy dance! Here is a wonderful scene being played in Thy endless drama!' 'Kill a hundred sheep,' continued the oracle, 'and two hundred fowls and offer them with pots of toddy to god *Karuppan* and his brothers, and they say that Nanda will at once be cured. The great gods are extremely angry with you for having neglected them so long.' The oracle ceased, and immediately a large dancing group of middle aged *pariahs* was arranged, and they sang,

Pedāri great, the guardian dev
Of all our fields, poor Nanda save!

Nanda added,
None but *Nateśan* has that power,
For he's my chosen lord and lover.

They sang,
O *Vira* dark with the turban huge,
Beneath thy feet we seek refuge.

Nanda said,
No turban could you make for one
Who filleth all these worlds alone.

They sang (admiringly),
Irula fat with aspect brave,
Thy belly is of goats the grave.

Nanda,
Trust not, ye fools! to demons base,
But Him who is all love and grace.

The enthusiastic dancers heard not Nanda, or at any rate heeded him not. But the dance was followed by a more serious affair—the butchering of innocent fowls and sheep. Nanda arose and vehemently protested against it, but in vain; he eloquently

preached to them about the grace and glory of the Creator, invited them to throw away their wicked gods and barbarous sacrifices and exhorted them to join with him in the worship of the beautiful, eternal Natarāja, but all his words were as pearls cast before swine; nay, worse than that, they tended to strengthen the current notions about his madness. Nanda turned away from that ignorant multitude in sorrow, and filled with pity for them prayed to God that they might be saved. With every moment of prayer, the longing to visit Chidambaram gained new strength, till it grew irrepressible and forced him to apply to his master for leave. After considerable hesitation, the brāhmin landlord was asked. But in the meanwhile, the pious devotees of *Pedāri* and company, finding that their gods had no power over Nanda, had carried their appeal to the more powerful tribunal of their visible agricultural god—the said brāhmin landlord, who unlike the invisible gods vouchsafed a prompt enquiry. Nanda appeared before his master just a little after the above deputation had gone from there, and made his application. The landlord was greatly enraged at the silly and impertinent request as he took it, and exclaimed, 'Eh, you want to visit Chidambaram, you *pariah* fool, you want to become a brāhmin I suppose, you rogue, you deserve to be whipped for this impertinence. You-vi-sit-Chi-dam-baram!!' Poor Nanda was thunderstruck, he felt himself undone and returned weeping without speaking a word. He went to the shade of his favourite tree, and there wept in torrents. 'O God,' he said to himself, 'How cruel art Thou! I have no right to blame the brāhmin. He of course spoke under Thy prompting, for not an atom moves save at Thy bidding. I am a poor *pariah*, too low for Thy grace. Ah! how cold art Thou! Thou hast no pity on this wretched, miserable, forlorn creature. I have nothing to be proud of—no wealth, no beauty, no fame, no learning, and as if this were not enough, I am born a low caste

bondsman. All this was nothing to me so long as I had the hope of Thy grace, and now I have been deprived even of that. Oh God, how can I live!' He even meditated suicide, saying, 'I shall do away with this my life and die a victim to Thy cruelty.' But hope, that most wonderful of all things, again asserted itself, and after a few hours of weeping, he thought within himself, 'God knows what is best for me, infinitely better than I do. I shall resign myself to His will in all things great and small. I am a rebellious spoilt child, and till I learn obedience and cheerful resignation, how can I obtain His grace? The brāhmin master might relent. And I am sure, when I am fit to enter His presence, I shall be allowed to do so.' A few days after, a second application was made for leave, with a similar result of refusal combined with rebuke. But the disappointment this time had a different effect on him: he consoled himself with the idea that he was not yet fitted for the holy presence, and that therefore he should strive to be more pious and god-loving and purer in heart. He redoubled his meditation, that there might not be in his waking state a single moment in which God was forgotten; curtailed his hours of sleep, danced in a wild and ecstatic way both morning and evening, and at other times wept for God's grace or rejoiced over His illimitable glory. In the stream, in the bird, in the tree, in man, in short, wherever he saw life, there he felt the presence of Natarāja; and under the sway of this strange fancy, often played with the stream, embraced the tree, ran after the bird and did a thousand other wild things which positively confirmed his kinsmen in the idea of his lunacy. They, poor folk, tried all sorts of remedies, even bound him by fetters and tortured him, but all in vain. Even while being tortured, he would not turn away from his Natarāja to get angry with his persecutors, and if the physical suffering was unbearable he would say, 'O Lord, the fault is not theirs, nothing is done but at Thy inward prompting. For-

give them, if only for my humble sake.' To him everything in the world was divine, and his love and tenderness to living creatures was simply boundless: he would feed the ants with sugar, would take up the worms from the roadside lest they might be scorched by the sun or crushed under the feet of the passersby, play with children and enjoy the music of the birds as if he were himself one of them.

In the meanwhile, however, the harvest time had come and, his kinsmen being desperately engaged with him, work in the fields really suffered. The landlord got enraged and sent for his slaves. All of them came except Nanda, and related everything that happened. The Brāhmin angrily dismissed them and sent for Nanda. Nanda came, bowed to his master and stood. The Brāhmin was greatly surprised at the remarkable degree of joy, calmness and humility that shone in his face. It clearly struck him that Nanda was no ordinary man, and that what was misconstrued by the ignorant *pariahs* as madness was nothing but an extravagance of piety and fervour. But he did not want to encourage him, and got really angry when the request to go to Chidambaram was put forward. Yet he was moved at the extremely piteous, sincere and imploring way in which it was urged and the quivering and suspense with which his reply was awaited, as if a soul's destiny hung upon his one word. And so he gently replied, 'nanda, you are really a good fellow, but have fallen into wild ways; you have not been doing your work properly of late. This is the harvest season, the corn has to be reaped, after all the harvest is gathered in, I shall give you leave to go to Chidambaram.' No sooner was this said than Nanda sprang into the fields dancing and leaping like a wild deer, and a few hours later again called at the landlord's backyard. When the Brāhmin asked why he was wanted, Nanda replied, 'Do me the favour, sir, to go with me

into the fields', and led the way followed by his master. And what was the latter's wonder when he found that the whole of his vast paddy fields had been reaped and the harvest gathered in like a mountain of gold—all the work of a single man, and that in the space of a few hours! He could hardly believe his eyes, and struggled to know if he was not dreaming. What he saw was, however, no vision but a concrete and thorough reality. And when convinced of this, he could only say, 'Nanda, you could not have done this work, nor all your kinsmen together. What a miracle has God worked in my field through you. This is the reward of your devotion—the proof to us incredible fools of your greatness. Nanda, you are the greatest, holiest and purest man that I have known, God's dearest *bhakta*. Ah! what a sin have I committed by treating you as my slave! From this moment, I am thy slave and this whole estate is yours. Bless me and recommend me to that high God who is so near and dear and kind to you.'

Nanda's feat was at the same time a miracle and not a miracle—not a miracle in the superstitious sense generally attached to the word, but a miracle, a genuine miracle in that it was beyond the power and comprehension of ordinary men. Most of us are ignorant of the resources of love. Its intensity, its abundance, and its wonderful possibilities are foreign to our mediocrity and, when measured by our leaden standard, appear legendary. Love topples the hills, leaps over the seas, annihilates the elements and shakes the universe. What can it not do and what has it not done? It is the energy of the Soul, nay it is the Soul itself, and when Nanda threw his whole soul into the work on which hung the fulfilment of his life's ambition, the result was miraculous, divine. The astounded Brāhmin fell at his feet. And here, by the way, it may be said to the credit of our caste system that, however rigorous

(Continued on page 552)

Swami Vivekananda and Buddhism

H.S. SARKAR

Buddha was the only prophet who did everything for others but nothing for himself. He taught that all evil will vanish if we become unselfish. He believed that, though we must do good to others, actually we do good only to ourselves. His love for all creatures was unbounded and all who came into contact with him were its beneficiaries. It was in view of these and other noble qualities that Swami Vivekananda had reverence for him. Sri H.S. Sarkar, of Bhuvaneshwar, Orissa, in this learned article refers to views expressed by Swamiji on Buddhism on various occasions.

Whenever righteousness declines and unrighteousness is in ascendent, for the protection of the virtuous, and the destruction of the wicked, and for establishing righteousness (*Dharma*), God manifests Himself. When Buddha was born, India was in need of an *avatār* (incarnation). Bhagawan Buddha, who was held in great reverence by Swamiji, brought the grinding priestly superstitions and their exploitative practices to an end through the message of love, compassion and service to all.

The personality of the Buddha, especially his compassionate heart, charmed Swami Vivekananda (then Naren) even when he was a boy. The legend that Buddha saved a bird from a hawk by giving his own flesh to satisfy the hunger of the hawk fascinated him. Again, the description of the death (*nirvāna*) of the Buddha made a deep impression on his mind. Even knowing that he would die if he partook the impure food offered with reverence to him by Chunda, an outcaste, the Buddha could not refuse it. Of course, he advised his disciples not to eat that food. He also thanked the man who offered him the deadly food for rendering him the greatest service by releasing him from the body.

Swami Vivekananda used to meditate even when a boy. On one such occasion he

was blessed with the vision of a monk of serene expression of inwardness born of indifference to all things. Seized with fear, he however got up, opened the door and left the room. Overcoming the momentary fear, he came back, but the monk he had seen in vision was gone. Swamiji later said, 'it may be a hallucination, but very often it comes to my mind that I had the good fortune of seeing the Lord Buddha that day.'¹

In October 1885, Sri Ramakrishna was brought for treatment first to a rented house in Shyampukur in Calcutta and later, in December 1885, shifted to the garden house in Cossipore. For quite some months before this, however, the life and gospel of the Lord Buddha was the sole topic of discussion among the disciples of the Great Master. The main speaker and inspirer was of course Naren. The renunciation and austerity and compassionate heart of the Enlightened One inspired the disciples to make a firm resolve to realize truth even at the risk of sacrificing their lives. The verse from the *Lalitavistara* was inscribed in bold letters on the wall of the meditation room: 'Let the body dry up on its seat; let its flesh and bones dissolve; without attaining the Enlightenment which

1. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1984), vol. 2, p. 917.

is difficult to achieve even in aeons, this body shall not rise from its seat.'²

So, restless and eager as he was even from boyhood to go to Buddha Gaya and meditate under the sacred Bo-tree, one day now he suddenly left for Buddha Gaya without informing any one. The brother disciples were worried. He, however, came back to Cossipore after a few days. He was highly impressed with what he had seen and realized there, and for some days could talk of nothing else. He was stirred by the intense renunciation of the Buddha who could persuade his own son to take to the life of renunciation, whereas Vyasa had advised his son Shukadeva to practise religion as a householder without giving up the world. The firm resolve of the Buddha to attain nirvāṇa under the Bodhi-tree at Gaya will always act as an inspiration for the seekers of the ultimate truth of life.

Swami Vivekananda was fond of visiting Buddhist monasteries. On the way to Chicago, he visited a Buddhist temple in Colombo and was greatly charmed by the gigantic image of the Buddha in a reclining posture, entering nirvāṇa. In Canton too he visited several Buddhist temples. Jamshedji Tata, who also was going to Chicago by the same steamer, *Peninsular*, told Sister Nivedita that 'When Swamiji was in Japan, everyone who saw him was immediately struck by his likeness to the Buddha.'³

The Buddhists had a special place in the heart of Swami Vivekananda. Dharmapala, who represented Buddhism in the Parliament of Religions, became a very good friend of Swamiji. Okakura, an illustrious

Buddhist from Japan, met Swamiji in Calcutta and the two men acknowledged their kinship immediately. 'We are,' said Swami Vivekananda, 'two brothers who meet again, having come from the ends of the earth.'⁴ He visited the ruins of Buddha Gaya again in the company of Okakura.

Swami Vivekananda took a patriotic pride in the fact that Buddhism was the only religion which had proselytized without fire and sword. He held the view that 'the very teachings of Christ could be traced back to

Let the body dry up on its seat; let its flesh and bones dissolve; without attaining the Enlightenment which is difficult to achieve even in aeons, this body shall not rise from its seat.

those of Buddha.'⁵ Vedanta was the foundation of Buddhism. And 'Christianity is founded in Buddhism.'⁶ Possibly, Swamiji's respect for Buddhism played a part in enabling him to enter into emotional harmony with Christianity.

While establishing the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Vivekananda was guided by the thoughts of the Buddha regarding monastic organization. Mahaprajapati Goutami, the foster-mother of Buddha, set her mind upon joining the Order. Buddha refused her thrice. At last, at the intervention of Ananda, Buddha agreed to permit Goutami to join his Order—on the condition that a nun even of a hundred years' standing should salute, respect and obey a monk even

2. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), vol. 1, p. 172; hereafter *The Life*.

3. *Prabuddha Bharata*, Nov. 1936, p. 698.

4. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), p. 162; hereafter *Life and Gospel*.

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p. 510; hereafter *CW*.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 511.

if he be the junior-most in the order. A nun should perform respectful offices for a monk. A nun should neither revile nor abuse nor reprove a monk officially. But a monk had the right to do so. Goutami accepted the condition and she was ordained.

Buddha then remarked: 'If, Ananda, women had not retired from household life to the house-less one, under the Doctrine and Discipline announced by the Tathagata, religion, Ananda, would long endure; a

Each one of you is just what I am. I am nothing but one of you. What I am today is what I made myself. Do you struggle yourself and make yourself what I am.

thousand years would the good Doctrine abide. But since, Ananda, women have now retired from the household life to the house-less one, under the Doctrine and Discipline announced by the Tathagata, not long, Ananda, will religion endure, but five hundred years, Ananda, will the Good doctrine abide.⁷

So, following Swamiji's wishes in the matter, a separate and self-managed Order for nuns, named after the Holy Mother Sarada Devi, was established in 1954. The aim of the monasteries is to create individuals—complete individuals, who would combine in their life an immense idealism with perfect commonsense.⁸ One only hopes and prays that the two monasteries will endure for thousands of years.

No doubt, Swami Vivekananda was critical of the negative elements of Buddhism, such as the ideas that there is no

God and there is no soul. 'I can say that God is the only being that exists; it is a very positive statement. He is the one reality. When Buddha says there is no soul, I say "Man, thou art one with the universe, thou art all things." How positive!' ⁹ Buddhism was a reforming religion, teaching a way of life which may be ideal to the wandering monk, living in the strictest abstinence. It can never be possible for the ordinary worldly-minded people to maintain this high standard of conduct. The emphasis given on the negative aspect of the teachings of Buddha by his followers was responsible for the eventual downfall of Buddhism in India.

Whatever criticism he might have made against Buddhism, Swami Vivekananda was extremely fond of the Buddha. Along with the gospel of Ramakrishna, he preached the gospel of Buddha: There should be no compromise with the priests; there should be no yielding to the supernatural arguments. The Buddha was the only sane man in human history, who was perfect in reason and wonderful in compassion.

His moral strength, his total independence of spirit, his renunciation, and his self-less effort to alleviate human suffering were always a source of inspiration to Swami Vivekananda. Buddha taught men to be self-reliant. Even while dying he told Ananda, 'Let there be no false bondage, no dependence on me, no false glorification of this passing personality. The Buddha is not a person; he is a realization. Work out your own salvation. Each one of you is just what I am. I am nothing but one of you. What I am today is what I made myself. Do you struggle yourself and make yourself what I am.'¹⁰

When he spoke of Buddha, he seemed at times to identify himself with his anti-

7. A. K. Mukherjee, *Concise History of Ancient India, Hinduism, Society, Religion and Philosophy*, vol. 3, 1983, pp. 353–5.

8. Romain Rolland, *Life and Gospel*, p. 322.

9. CW., vol. 8, p. 103.

10. CW., vol. 8, p. 105 and vol. 3, p. 528.

Brahminical spirit. Sometimes an uncomprehending listener would enquire if Swamiji were a Buddhist. Swamiji would say with all humility: 'I am the servant of the servants of Buddha. Who was there ever like him?—the Lord—who never performed one action for Himself—with a heart that em-

All religions being true, God is in every religion. Brutality has to be eliminated from the society. It should be remembered that love alone leads to divinity. This is possible if we love and help each other.

braced the whole world! So full of pity that He—prince and monk—would give His life to save a little goat! So loving that He sacrificed Himself to the hunger of a tigress!—to the hospitality of a pariah and blessed him!¹¹

In the Parliament of Religions Swami Vivekananda also spoke of Buddhism. He had nothing but kind words for Buddhism as a whole. Addressing the Buddhists, he

11. *The Life*, vol. 2, p. 340.

said: 'We cannot live without you, nor you without us. Then believe, what separation has shown to us, that you cannot stand without the brain and philosophy of the Brahman, nor we without your heart. This separation between the Buddhist and the Brahman is the cause of the downfall of India. That is why India is populated by three hundred millions of beggars, and that is why India has been the slave of conquerors for the last one thousand years. Let us, then, join the wonderful intellect of Brahmans with the heart, the noble soul, the wonderful humanizing power of the great Master.'¹²

All religions being true, God is in every religion. Brutality has to be eliminated from the society. It should be remembered that love alone leads to divinity. This is possible if we love and help each other. A beautiful prayer of the Buddhist will help us: 'I bow down to all the saints; I bow down to all the prophets, I bow down to all holy men and women all over the world!'¹³ □

12. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries: His Prophetic Mission* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), vol. 1, p. 132.

13. *CW.*, vol. 8, p. 219.

धर्मं चरत माऽधर्मं सत्यं वदत नाऽनृतं।
दीर्घं पश्यत मा ह्रस्वं परं पश्यत माऽपरम्॥

Practice righteousness, not unrighteousness; speak the truth, not untruth;

Think deeply, not in a shallow way; have the highest in view, not the mundane.

Swami Vivekananda's Contribution:

Service to God in Man and Personal Fulfilment

RAJ PRABHAKAR

In Chicago on 31 August 1993, Mrs. Raj Prabhakar of Lubbock, Texas, a long-time member of the Vedanta Societies of St. Louis and San Francisco, presented the following paper at the Centenary Celebration of the 1893 Parliament of Religions.

Her paper examines the uniqueness of Swami Vivekananda's ideas on the personal and spiritual dimensions of the philosophy and practice of Service. She very perceptively concludes that 'Swami Vivekananda's philosophy is not a contradiction but a culmination and fulfilment of sacred traditions....It is a comprehensive philosophy....In this mode, demands of intellect and of emotion are harmonized, and an avenue for expressing them through action is made possible.'

I will begin this paper from where it all started!

In Dakshineswar, a suburb of Calcutta, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva was sitting in his room on the small couch addressing visitors and spiritual seekers. In the course of his remarks he raised the question: 'If God can be worshipped in the image why not also in human beings, the living manifestations of the Lord? Jiva (the individual soul) is Shiva (the Lord). Can not Shiva be worshipped in the Jiva?'

If the worship of God in a symbol or an image can elevate a person spiritually, how much more spiritually efficient must be the worship of *That* in a fellow being! Sri Ramakrishna had expressed these views in his talks to visitors and spiritual seekers before. However this day a young man by the name of Naren, later to be known as Swami Vivekananda, was sitting there among the devotees listening to the Master. This remark made a deep, transforming impression on the young Naren. With his keen intellect and deep spirituality, he immediately grasped the depth of that profound

question.

He came out of Sri Ramakrishna's room to the adjoining veranda and expressed his sentiment about the magnitude of this concept. He said that if he ever got the opportunity, this was the message that he would like to give to the world. It was this great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who fused into one harmonious whole all the apparently contradictory philosophical systems, and reconciled divergent forms of work and worship, rituals and rites. It was for Swami Vivekananda to bring into prominence and further elaborate and exemplify what his teacher Sri Ramakrishna practised and preached.

In the years after Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, when Swami Vivekananda was in the process of establishing guidelines for the establishment of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, the dictum: '*Ātmano mokṣārtham Jagaddhitāya ca*, For the salvation of one's own soul and the welfare of the world', was one of the guiding principles in his mind. Swami Vivekananda's effort to develop and emphasize this view was seriously questioned by some of his brother

disciples, and looked at with scepticism by the mainstream spiritual establishments. The stereotyped distinctions between worldliness and other-worldliness, between spiritual and secular, were the barriers that Swami Vivekananda had to overcome.

Focus on one's own salvation and wellbeing, rigid loyalty to one's own God and dogma can lead to fanaticism, narrowness and, in a way, to selfishness. World history bears ample evidence to the fanatic warfare and bloodshed that stems from that narrow outlook. In Swami Vivekananda's words: 'When you have avoided fanaticism then alone will you work well. It is the level-headed man, the calm man of good judgement and cool nerves, of great sympathy and love who does good work and so does good to himself. The fanatic is foolish and has no sympathy; he can never straighten out the world, nor can he become pure and perfect.'¹

In a lecture given in San Francisco in 1900, entitled 'Buddha's Message to the World', Swami Vivekananda says: 'Man was loving God and had forgotten all about his brother man. The man who in the name of God can give up his very life, can also turn around and kill his brother man in the name of God. That was the state of the world. They would sacrifice the son for the glory of God, would rob nations for the glory of God....It is man that is to be loved.'²

On the other hand, social service and humanitarian works without a spiritual anchor in the Self can create more confusion and be a disservice to the recipient. The

paternalistic attitude of many welfare workers robs the recipient of his or her dignity. The facts of history and the present day condition of welfare organizations all over the world bear witness to that fact. Burnout, stress, disillusionment and alienation are often the experience of the giver. One of the oldest scriptures, the *Bhagavad Gita*, is a great exposition of the four Yogas of Knowledge, Devotion, Mental Discipline and Selfless Service, and their synthesis. *Karma Yoga*, selfless service, is one the four yogas, but it is viewed more or less as an accessory to *Jñāna*, the path of Knowledge and *Bhakti*, the path of Devotion. Seen only as a means for leading one towards *Jnana Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga*, it is limited and not expressive of the universality of the teaching.

But according to Swami Vivekananda it is both the end *and* the means. The essential teaching of Yoga is to make the end and the means the same—to reconcile *dharma* and *karma*. It is to look upon each soul as one's own and thus escape from duality. 'Those who look upon all creatures as their own selves escape from the great fear,' is a teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*. However over a period of time, spiritual seekers began to view action and contemplation as two distinct paths. Withdrawal from society, a life of seclusion and contemplation was viewed as a more serious and earnest quest. Though we read in the *Bhagavad Gita* again and again that we all must work incessantly, work thus being a constant factor, how we do our work is the key question. Do we do it with attachment, bound by desire—as slaves, or with detachment, discrimination and freedom—as masters?

After the *Bhagavad Gita* it was in the teachings of Lord Buddha that the concept of service was developed and emphasized. To quote from Swami Vivekananda's 'Buddha's Message to the World', 'It (Buddhism) was the first wave of intense love for all

1. Swami Vivekananda, *Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1973), p. 65.

2. 'Buddha's Message to the World,' *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), vol. 8, p. 100.

men—the first wave of true unadulterated wisdom.³ In Swami Vivekananda's view, Buddha gave a new turn to devotion. He said that it is man we should love. Buddha's teaching was based on the concept of *anātmā*—there is no soul, no God, no essence to anything, everything is just momentary.

However, the non-dualistic philosophy of Advaita Vedanta teaches that God is the One Divine Essence of everyone and everything; there are no 'others'. Based on that philosophy, Swami Vivekananda unifies service and personal emancipation through the perception that everything in the whole universe is a symbol, a manifestation of God. Thus our personal spiritual emancipation is gained through serving the manifestation of God in man.

Love and Service

Concepts of selfless service, renunciation and final emancipation are not original or new in the religious thought and philosophy of the world. As a matter of fact, they form the basis of the major religions. Christ taught that service rendered to the poor was service rendered to God:

'For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat....I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: Naked, and ye clothed me....' Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, 'when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee?... When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?...' And the King shall answer and say unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done *it* unto me.'⁴

With his deep passion for Truth and for

human welfare and happiness Swami Vivekananda became a teacher of love. Love of God flowing into service of human beings, faith flowing into work. In his message of comprehensive spirituality, he represents the Vedantic passion for human welfare in all its phases. Unqualified love and service are Swami Vivekananda's special

In Swami Vivekananda's view, Buddha gave a new turn to devotion. He said that it is man we should love. Buddha's teaching was based on the concept of anātmā—there is no soul, no God, no essence to anything, everything is just momentary.

contribution. One is given the freedom to be his own self and grow in his own way, yet service is offered as a mode of worship to the Supreme. Infinite are His expressions and Vedanta accepts them all, salutes them all, and serves all without distinction. Swami Vivekananda's emphasis on the role of spirituality in service is a confirmation and not a contradiction of what has been expounded by different religious traditions. He sheds new light and harmonizes the conflicting claims, as they are perceived, of personal fulfilment and human welfare. Too often, the integrity of the service has been compromised by being tinged with an attitude of compassion. But in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda philosophy, the concept of compassion implies duality, there must be two—the privileged and the underprivileged. Sri Ramakrishna asks who are we to show compassion to others, the Lord is the only one who can be compassionate; we can only serve and worship.

When the opportunity to serve is looked upon as a privilege it can be a tremendous source of joy and fulfilment. Through serving with love, a feeling of expansion comes. Expansion is life, contrac-

3. Ibid.

4. Matthew, xxv, 35–40.

tion is death. Hospitality to the guests is an act of piety in almost all traditions. It is customary in many Indian homes to first set aside some food as an offering to the Lord. Then with great joy it is given to whoever comes to the door for alms, or the family priest. Thus a bond is established between the giver and the recipient. The bonding thread here is the Divine. The Divine in you and the Divine in me! This sentiment is expressed in the statement, *Atithi devo bhava*, the guest is God. The literal meaning of the word *atithi* is without date. So a guest is he who just comes without previous notice, unannounced and he is to be shown great hospitality, as to the Supreme Lord. While we were growing up in India, an unannounced guest at mealtime was quite frequent. We as children were always eager and happy to share our part of the meal and make sure that the guest was well-fed. It gave us great joy.

A Living Example

Let me tell you a true story: It is about an elderly lady, frail in body, her eyesight almost gone, advanced in years and in wisdom. I would see her whenever I visited my aunt in a small village. She was always serene and poised, looking over the household of her three sons and their families. She would sit in the kitchen and serve food to this large household and many guests. One day she said to me, 'My child, you know with these hands I have served innumerable meals to large gatherings of people since I was eighteen.' Saying these words, she opened her wrinkled hands with deep lines on her palms. She continued, 'But never have I run out of food. There is always enough for everyone. You know the Lord of abundance provides when we serve with generosity. Serving and feeding people is my spiritual practice. I can't read or write so I don't know the scriptures. I have not travelled far from my village nor could I afford to go on pilgrimages.'

Then she told me the secret of her peace and her contentment. She said that she became a widow at the young age of eighteen with three very young children to look after. Stunned by this cruel hand of fate she would sit depressed and desolate day after day feeling sorry for herself and her children. One day her father-in-law asked her if she would like to serve the meals at the temple. He was the head priest of the local temple and the custom was to serve an ongoing lunch to devotees, visitors,—whoever came to the temple. Very shy and modest as she was at that young age she gently nodded her head giving her assent. So from the next day it was her job to sit in the temple kitchen and serve those meals. Three days in a row they ran out of food while serving the guests. On the fourth day her father-in-law came to her and inquired as to what kind of thoughts ran through her mind while serving the food. Before she could answer, he said, 'Look my child, do you get anxious when you see a long line of people coming for food? Do you get worried that there won't be enough food left for you?' The young daughter-in-law nodded her head, for those were exactly the thoughts running through her mind while serving meals to the temple guests.

Then this old lady paused, and with a broad smile on her toothless face and an expression that indicated she was going to give me the greatest secret in the world, she continued, 'My father-in-law said to me, "Oh my child, that is not the way to serve that consecrated food! Look, when you sit in that temple kitchen to serve the food, try to forget yourself altogether. Feel that it is a great privilege for you to render this service. Feel that the Lord Himself has come in the form of these devotees to bless you. Feel that there is abundant food. The Divine Mother Herself is providing the supplies. Pray, May all that I serve have plenty to eat and may they all be nourished by this blessed food."' Then holding the edge of her saree and tying

a knot in it she said, 'Since that day I have tied that piece of advice in the corner of my cloth. From that day to this day never have I run out of food. The Lord has always supplied plenty and nobody has ever gone hungry from these doors.'

The villagers believed that if grandma was to serve the food to the guests on special festivals everything would go well. They would not run out of food. By feeding others, she herself got her nourishment. Did not Christ say, 'He that loseth his life for My sake, shall find it?' What is lost in the process? Is it not ignorance, small-mindedness and selfishness? What is gained is the expanded Self. This is the practice of 'Loving thy neighbour as thyself.' This simple unsophisticated village woman touched my heart deeply that day. Yes, actual spiritual practice is very simple, very easy, and a lot of fun too!

When service is rendered with an attitude of humility and worshipfulness, it is not only the giver who is blessed. The person on the receiving end is also uplifted and deified. He does not have to feel humiliated and robbed of his dignity and self-esteem.

People sometimes say: 'These are fine sentiments and lofty ideals, but do they really work? Is this a mere hypothesis or is it a working formula?'

The Answer: Practical Vedanta

As we all know, here in the United States we have free public schools, comparatively well-equipped and well-staffed. But we also know about the attitude of the students towards their teachers. We are aware of the increasing violence and the hazards of teaching in these schools. But let us look at another kind of education, one I have personally seen.

One time, while travelling in South

India I was staying at one of the Sarada Math (convent) guest houses. The Math had a school for the poor children of the neighbourhood. It was just a small room, four brick walls, no fancy furniture, no special equipment. The sannyasini (nun) in charge of the Ashrama told me that the children came from very poor families. The school provided them with some clothes and that was all the clothes most of them had. The school also gave them lunch and some snacks in the afternoon. For many of them that was all the food they had for the day. The sannyasinis of the Math were their teachers. Feeding and clothing these children, teaching and training them was their spiritual practice, their adoration of the Lord.

One day while I was there, one of these teachers was leaving to go to the Calcutta Ashrama. That day her students were so sad at heart! Half-starving and poor as they were, they brought little packages of sweets

When service is rendered with an attitude of humility and worshipfulness, it is not only the giver who is blessed. The person on the receiving end is also uplifted and deified. He does not have to feel humiliated and robbed of his dignity and self-esteem.

and other things as gifts for their teacher. The teacher, deeply touched by their generosity and their gesture of love, was fighting back her tears. Pretending to be annoyed, she was telling the children to eat those sweets themselves. However, those beautiful little faces, tears running down their cheeks were firm in their resolve. 'Dear teacher, these gifts are for you and we are not taking them back,' was the unanimous reply. How could the teacher eat those sweets knowing that the little Gopalas (child Krishnas) had probably never tasted those

delicacies themselves. How could she refuse them either, for this was a token of their love and honour for the teacher?

What a sweet predicament! Watching this play between the teacher and her students, I wondered who would call these children poor. Though lacking in material wealth they were rich indeed. Their wealth was their ability to love and to honour!

Incidents such as these prove that Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of seeing the Divine in all, is not mere hypothesis, it is indeed a working formula. The teacher did not look on these children as poor unfortunate souls and feel sorry for them. She saw the divinity in them, and the children responded to that vision by their genuine love and generosity.

Many of you are familiar with the story of the thief who came into Pavhari Baba's place with the intention of stealing and became an illumined saint.⁵ This is the case of

5. Pavhari Baba: A holy man of India. Swami Vivekananda visited and admired him very much. One night a thief entered Pavhari Baba's cottage. While the thief was in the process of stealing the meagre belongings he found there, he saw the holy man approaching him and bolted out of the cottage with some cooking pots and pans in his hands. Pavhari Baba was running after the thief with some lids in his hand imploring him to take the lids also for the cooking pots, as he saw the Divine in all. Many years after this incident, Swami Vivekananda while wandering in the Himalayas came across a man with a spiritual glow and aura of peace around him. The two holy men sat down for a spiritual conversation and Swami Vivekananda mentioned the above episode from Pavhari Baba's life. At this point the other holy man, pointing towards himself said, 'You are looking at that thief, Swami!'

Divinity invoked and becoming manifest. In the life of Christ also there are many such instances. When Mary Magdalene came to Him, He did not see her as a sinner. It was the Spirit alone that He saw in her. The apparent self is removed and the Spirit alone shines. Did Sri Ramakrishna see the sinner in women of ill-fame? He saw in them His luminous Divine Mother alone.

This is the process of covering the whole universe with the Lord. As said in the *Īśa-Upaniṣad*, 'Whatever exists in this changing universe should be covered by the Lord....'⁶ In this practice we do not have to run away from the world, we do not have to wait for heaven in a far-off promised land in the far-off future. The world is not condemned and the people in it are not our distractions from our spiritual quest. In this

In this practice we do not have to run away from the world, we do not have to wait for heaven in a far-off promised land in the far-off future. The world is not condemned and the people in it are not our distractions from our spiritual quest. In this context the world provides us with the resources for our spiritual unfoldment

context the world provides us with the resources for our spiritual unfoldment. In this process the world itself becomes a mart of joy for a seeker of God. The experience is here and now. Traditionally a distinction is made between the followers and non-followers of a certain religion and also between the good and the wicked. Swami Vivekananda embraces the whole universe in one big sweep. He says, 'My God the poor, my God the wicked, my God the sick!' Yes, here is the unconditional adoration of the Divine

6. Verse 1, *The Upanishads*, tr. Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1973), vol. 1, p. 201.

in all its manifestations.

Swami Vivekananda says: 'Let us give up all this foolish talk of doing good to the world. It is not waiting for your or for my help yet we must work and constantly do good, because it is a blessing to ourselves. This world will always continue to be a mixture of good and evil. Our duty is to sympathize with the weak and to love the evil-doer. The world is a grand moral gymnasium wherein we all have to take exercise so as to become stronger and stronger spiritually.' He says further, 'You must remember that freedom of the soul is the goal....By work alone men may get to where Buddha got largely by meditation or Christ by prayer.'⁷

In this age of agnosticism and nihilism when faith and traditional values are questioned, when modern man is in search of his soul, a search in which his technological advancement and great material accomplishments have failed him, Swami Vivekananda's message is of great relevance. It is particularly relevant because in practising the discipline of *Karma Yoga* one need not believe in any religious doctrine or even in God. One can work it out himself. Swami Vivekananda's message humanizes religion and spiritualizes society. It builds a bridge between reason and faith.

7. 'The Secret of Work', *Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga*, p. 36.

Swami Vivekananda's philosophy is not a contradiction but a culmination and fulfilment of sacred traditions. That is why it is sometimes termed 'Neo-Vedanta', which, in his philosophical exposition, is a synthesis of divergent paths. They are not contradictory or mutually exclusive. His is the message of universality. It is a comprehensive philosophy. There is scope for practising from the high altitude, ivory tower of Advaita (non-dual) Vedanta, but there is also room for expressing our emotional and aesthetic tendencies. In this mode, demands of intellect and of emotion are harmonized and an avenue for expressing them through action is made possible. Harmony is achieved through directing all human tendencies to the supreme goal of God Realization. This is practical Vedanta.

When we dedicate all the love of our heart, all the intensity of our thought and all our powers of action to the service of all, the harmony of religion is made real and practical. The meeting-point of people from different walks of life and different beliefs is found in this philosophy, where all modes of work and worship are paths to realization. When sacred and secular become one, life itself is religion. It is a concept of harmony of all human energy. This then provides the synthesis that brings about a unifying love for all, along with inner peace and personal fulfilment. □

If a nation values anything more than freedom, it will lose its freedom, and the irony of it is that if it is comfort or money that it values more, it will lose that too.

—W. Somerset Maugham, *Strictly Personal* (Doubleday)

Indian Renaissance:

Swami Vivekananda's Contribution

DR. A. USHA RANI

A brief and earnest plea that we remember and implement Swamiji's principal ideas for fundamental changes in ourselves and hence in society.

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During the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, India witnessed a tremendous change in its spiritual and cultural arena which could be termed a Renaissance. The literal meaning of the word *renaissance* is of course 'a rebirth' or reawakening of something which once existed in a perfect and finished form. One of the salient urges of the Renaissance was to bring back the glory of the past in a form compatible with the contemporary spirit. Like the European Renaissance which revived the glories of ancient Greece and Rome, the Indian Renaissance was not an artistic and literary movement only; nor was it completely a religious movement, nor restricted to a particular field. But it marked the beginning of a new Age of Indian history and culture.

It was pioneered by Raja Rammohan Roy and led by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, brought up to the modern period by Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo Ghose and others. When we keenly observe the activities of these personalities who moulded modern Indian thought, we find them truly extraordinary, whose greatness took varied forms. Some are indomitable and assertive, whereas others are unassuming and humble. But they all had the power to understand and assimilate in their own ways the underlying spirit of Indian civilization and the mighty currents

of its cultural and spiritual wealth.

Swami Vivekananda with his deep understanding of India's past and profound vision of her potentiality was, of all of them, the most conscious of his role as a rejuvenator and life-giver to the Nation. His endeavour was two-fold: to free the Indian intellectual and cultural life from domination by unwanted foreign influences, on the one hand, and to put the nation on a firm footing to welcome the new dynamism and great scientific achievements of the West, on the other. Though he worked for peace and harmony with all vigour and devotion, he hoped that for India it would be a dynamic peace and harmony as an equal of other nations. His philosophy was not merely a conceptual or academic formula, but had its roots in practical Vedanta. His heart particularly responded to the need to raise the condition of the Indian masses and women.

Swamiji started his mission to dispel the darkness of ignorance and enlighten the world with the bright and life-giving rays of the sun of Vedanta. Subsequently he established in India the twin organizations known as the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission which now have taken root in other parts of the world. If we stretch our vision back to the last decade of the 19th century we can recall this charming personality at Chicago, addressing the Parliament of Religions. Though he believed

that an energetic espousal of the Vedantic principle of the spiritual Oneness of the universe, made practical by coupling it with renunciation and service, was the way to solve most of the modern problems of religion and society, he did not stress the need for anyone to become 'converted' to Vedanta or Hinduism, for he fully accepted that all religions are true.

To Swami Vivekananda 'each soul is potential divine'.¹ So each human being is a spark of God. True though that is, at present this divinity in most persons is veiled by ignorance. Fortunately, however, this veil can be removed and the hidden divinity be allowed to manifest itself. Since the essence of people is divine, all the religions and their disciplines and doctrines, dogmas, rituals, books and temples are important only in so far as they help to uncover that divine nature within.²

The total development of an individual occurs only when his or her innate divinity is manifested. This all religions agree on, more or less. But Swami Vivekananda's special contribution to the Renaissance still continuing in India and elsewhere is that, he showed that one could realize one's divine inner Nature by also working for, serving, and worshipping all living beings as God, as sparks of the Divine Being Itself. Going ahead even of Sri Shankara and others, he brought out Vedanta from the books, caves and monasteries and broadcast it freely to one and all; he, so to say, brought God *down to earth*. Individuals should be developed harmoniously—in heart, mind and hand in every field of life. This is what Swamiji termed 'making Vedanta practical'.³

As a true Vedantist he was convinced that only God *is*: therefore the *jīva* is *Śiva* (a Human being is God), and if not the whole of God, he is at least the best symbol of God, to be served and worshipped as God in so far as possible. Therefore Vivekananda exhorted all to render unselfish service to the needy. If one serves people with the feeling that God is the Indweller in every being, that service will bring real good to oneself and also to the world. Neither education, nor religion, nor any other social activity will become forever fruitful unless it is based on practical Vedanta, the application to our daily life of the vision of God in every being.

Since each one, according to Vivekananda, is to be first regarded as eternally perfect and pure, the emphasis will not be on the need of 'reform' by outside agencies but on individuals developing noble qualities, on growth from within.⁴ Though Vivekananda supported the age-old traditions of spiritual unity, our common social practices and ideals, and the great efficacy of renunciation and service for the realization of the Divine within, certainly he was not a passive observer of our accreted social evils. He denounced the injustice of untouchability, priestcraft, and the abuses of the caste system as being rigid barriers and blocks to Indian progress. He went so far as to describe untouchability as a form of mental disease! Still the solutions he offered to all these problems were always positive and constructive. In his opinion the causes for the downfall of India are neglect of women and the masses. So women and the masses must be well educated for the welfare of the country.

But he saw that when education is made purely academic, neglecting the physical and spiritual human potential, it becomes lopsided and incomplete. He criti-

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, p. 124.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 49.

4. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 195ff.

cized such incomplete education, calling it 'clerk-making' rather than man-making education. Since education is the principal tool to develop individuals as well as society, he proposed imparting life-building and character-building education, that is education conducive to our manifesting the highest possible all-round perfection latent in us. In his words 'the end and aim of all training is to make man grow in all aspects.'⁵ Hence his scheme of education is also for the social and spiritual regeneration of the country. A practical Vedantist, he supported secular education also and held that educa-

tion must spread far and wide. It must reach the masses—men and women equally, and promote right thinking, right feeling and right action.

Swami Vivekananda, with his broad and liberal outlook is a still fresh and true symbol of the Indian Renaissance. Nonetheless, his stress was also upon the welfare of humanity. So his eminent contribution to society should be carried forward with renewed vigour. If we all extend our cooperation by putting his ideas and ideals into action, no doubt the world will achieve a qualitatively greater and wider prosperity than ever known before. □

5. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 15ff.

The Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

(Continued from page 510)

in our lifetime unless we raise our level of consciousness through *samādhi*.

The teacher would not like us to believe something as unreal till we are convinced. So for the time being he accepts the world to be real and explains it—the world has emanated from That, it subsists in That—just as the snake subsists in the rope—, and it also disappears in that same Reality.

Now comes indirectly the concept of Paramēśvara—, the creator, preserver, ruler and destroyer of the universe—a step below the Absolute, i.e. Brahman. The teacher is introducing the concept of the personal God or Īśvara, who is the Absolute concretized and personalized. The production of the world by Him is similar to human production of things by us. But the dimension of His creation is infinite, whereas human creation

is finite. Also His *tapasyā* or motivation for creation or manifestation is *jñānamaya*, consisting of knowledge. He is omniscient, *sarvajña*, i.e. He knows everything in general. He is also *sarvaṇit*, knowing everything in their details. That is, He knows His own creation in principle and He knows it also in detail. He is the Knower of all the branches of knowledge. Finally, from that Brahman, or Īśvara, *nāma-rūpa* (name and form) and *anna* (food) which constitute the universe—are born.

Thus, to the question how this world we perceive came into being, the answer we get is that this world is the creation of Brahman through Its willed desire, without assistance from any external agent, in the order described in the verses.

(to be continued)

New Light on Vedic India and Ancient Civilizations

N.S. RAJARAM

For more than two centuries all history has been written from a European perspective. Since the principal activity of European nations during this period was colonialism, the result has been the creation of a version of world history that still reflects colonial biases and interests. Nowhere is this more evident than in the history of ancient India. While India has maintained the oldest and the most extensive records of any ancient civilization, what is found in history books today is a gross misinterpretation of ancient records like the Vedas and the Puranas, and a version of history that reflects colonial interests and prejudices rather than real facts. This is further compounded by the fact that most of these historians—mostly amateurs like bureaucrats and missionaries—lacked the necessary skills and temperament.

But thanks to recent discoveries in archaeology, astronomy, ancient mathematics and satellite photography, as well as bold new interpretations of ancient records we are now in a position to get a much better understanding of ancient history of India and the world. These new findings largely support traditional Indian accounts. They show that the Vedic civilization has roots in India that go back to 7000 BC and beyond. Also, it is becoming increasingly clear that the famous Rig-Veda and the flowering of the Vedic Age were the product of unique ecological conditions brought about by the melting of ice caps after the last Ice Age. Research has also shown that the current version of history based on the idea of the Aryan invasion is nothing but a fiction that owes more to modern European politics and missionary interests than anything in ancient Indian records or science.

In addition to political considerations, ignorance of science on the part of nineteenth century European scholars contributed to the distortions. They tried to combine new discoveries in linguistics with Christian dogmas like the creation of the world on 23 October 4004 BC. It is now clear that the origins of the speakers of Indo-European languages—from India to Ireland—can be traced to India well before 4000 BC. But the most dramatic finding of all is the fact that Vedic India represents an earlier and more spiritual layer of civilization that existed before the rise of Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley. The home of this primordial civilization—of the world before the dawn—was the greater Vedic land from the Indus to the Ganges.

Several books by Indian and American scholars present a new model of Indian and world history based on these discoveries. (See references.) The following article is a summary, by N.S. Rajaram (of Bangalore) himself, of two books: one his own—The Politics of History: Aryan Invasion Theory and the Subversion of Scholarship, and the other written with David Frawley—Vedic Aryans and the Origins of Civilization.

I

Ancient India: Old Theories and New Evidence

An extraordinary feature of the history of ancient India is that its creators were neither Indians nor historians, but European linguistics and colonial officials. It is a testimony not only to India's colonial past but also to the failure of her educators, especially her modern historians that this version representing colonial interests and Christian missionary biases is still what is taught in her schools. These interests combined with European nationalist movements and other factors that had nothing to do with ancient India have conspired to create a version of history in which it was claimed that all her achievements were the result of invasions. The earliest of these we are told was by a people known as the Aryans who brought with them the Sanskrit language and the *Rig-Veda*, the most ancient of the world's scriptures.

The result of this invasionist model has been unfortunate not only for India but for all of world history. For what this artificial imposition has done is to wipe out most

European family of languages that populate Asia and Europe.

With the power of hindsight and the necessary historical perspective it can now be seen that the concealing of this ancient history, or rather, the failure to explore it resulted from efforts to make British rule palatable to Indians by claiming all of their achievements to have been foreign imports brought by invaders. And this was made to include the most ancient of all—the creation of the *Rig-Veda* no less—by claiming it to be the result of a foreign invasion of a people who called themselves the Arya. Their homeland was placed somewhere in Central Asia or even Europe. By this semantic exercise, all the achievements of the ancient Indians were transferred to foreign invaders. This invasion of India was said to have taken place sometime after 1500 BC. It was claimed that these invaders overwhelmed and destroyed the inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilization, the largest civilization of the ancient world. As we shall soon see, this invasion scenario—entirely the creation of modern Europeans—receives absolutely no

...a student is likely to be left with the impression that the Aryan invasion theory must be based on archaeological research, the result of studying the Harappan sites. This however is not the case at all; the origins of the Aryan invasion theory go back more than two hundred years, long before there was any archaeology. They go back in fact to the religious and political beliefs prevailing in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, particularly to German nationalism.

traces of a heritage that belongs not only to India but to all Indo-Europeans—from the Vedic Aryans of India to the Celtic Druids of Ireland. But now following a more scientific approach combined with an unbiased study of ancient Indian records, it is finally possible to get a glimpse at the world as it was before the rise of the ancient civilization of Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley. It was a primeval world, the source from which sprang the speakers of the great Indo-

support from Indian records or archaeology. But let us first take a close look at the picture as presented in history books for more than a century.

When we take a look at almost any book on Indian history today, we find that it begins with a description of the Indus Valley Civilization. It usually starts off with an account of the discovery of the two major sites Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, followed by a

brief description of what was found there. It will then probably tell us how these cities show a remarkably advanced urban civilization with carefully planned cities with magnificent public buildings, drainage system and water supply. We will also be told how this civilization went into decline and finally disappeared by 1500 BC. The main cause of this disappearance, we will then be informed, was the invasion of India by nomadic tribes from Central Asia called the Aryans. According to this account, these invading Aryans, who are said to have entered India through the passes in the northwest, fought and overcame the inhabitants of the Indus Valley and established themselves over much of North India. They are then said to have composed their literature, the most important of which is the *Rig-Veda*. The history of India then begins in earnest with the records of the Aryans following their invasion.

From all this a student is likely to be left with the impression that the Aryan invasion

Thus, on the basis of evidence from archaeology, mathematics, astronomy and metallurgy it is now clear that the Aryans must have been firmly established in India by 4000 BC. By then they were already an advanced civilization.

theory must be based on archaeological research, the result of studying the Harappan sites. This however is not the case at all; the origins of the Aryan invasion theory go back more than two hundred years, long before there was any archaeology. They go back in fact to the religious and political beliefs prevailing in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, particularly to German nationalism. Later on, linguistic researchers took this ready-made race theory and gave it a linguistic twist. The most influential figure in all this was the German Indologist Frederick

Max Müller—an eminent Sanskrit scholar figure but extraordinarily ignorant of science. He was in fact so ignorant that he believed in the Biblical superstition that the world was created at 9:00 AM on 23 October 4004 BC! To this day, Indian history as taught in school is full of such unscientific absurdities, the legacy of Max Müller and other equally ignorant and superstitious Indologists.

We can take a look at the issue of the racial and political aspects of the theory later in the article, but first a brief look at the linguistic form in which the theory evolved is helpful. It was formulated by European linguists to account for close similarities that they found between Indian and European languages. In 1784, Sir William Jones, then serving as a Justice in Bengal, noted that there were great similarities between Sanskrit and European languages, especially Classical Greek. Jones is therefore rightly regarded as the founder of the field of Indology, but he was not the first modern scholar to note this resemblance. That honour belongs probably to the Florentine merchant Filippo Sassetti, who after a five year stay in Goa (1583–88) stated that there was definitely a connection between Sanskrit and European languages.

While he was not the first to notice these similarities, Jones was the first to make a systematic comparative study. For instance, Sanskrit *Deva* for 'God' becomes *Deus* in Latin, *Dio* in Italian, *Dieu* in French, and *Theo* in Greek. Similarly *Agni* in Sanskrit which means fire becomes *Ignis* in Latin from which we get modern English words ignite and ignition. And there are many others, far too numerous to have been accidental. To account for such linguistic affinities, linguists proposed that the ancestors of all the people who spoke these related languages, now called Indo-European, must at one time have lived in the same area before branching out into

various parts of Asia and Europe.

In proposing this migration or invasion theory, linguists were not creating a new theory, but essentially borrowing and repackaging an Aryan race theory formulated by European nationalists; it was just old wine in a new bottle. Thus it is wrong now to claim that linguistic discoveries led to the Aryan invasion theory. The original homeland of these invading Aryans was placed somewhere in Central Asia or even Europe. The Aryans were said to have been the branch of Indo-Europeans who invaded India. Max Müller assigned the date of this invasion to about 1500 BC, said to be based on some linguistic and literary considerations, but in reality to make it agree with his superstition that the Aryans could not have come before the Biblical Flood which was placed in 2448 BC; the Christian Fundamentalist belief of 4004 BC for the creation of the world leads to 2448 BC for the Flood. He also assigned the composition of the *Rig-Veda* to 1200 BC to make it conform to his Biblical beliefs.

Archaeology entered this picture relatively late. The ruins of Harappa on the Ravi river (one of the tributaries of the Indus) had been known for a long time, but its value for history was recognized only after Daya Ram Sahni in 1921 expressed the opinion that they may belong to the pre-Mauryan period. About a year later, S.D. Banerjee opened a trench near Mohenjo-Daro 400 miles to the southwest and suggested that the two sites might be part of the same ancient civilization. Considering the state of knowledge in 1922 it was an extraordinary insight. But it was an article by John Marshall in 1924 in the *Illustrated London News* that brought the discoveries to the attention of the world.

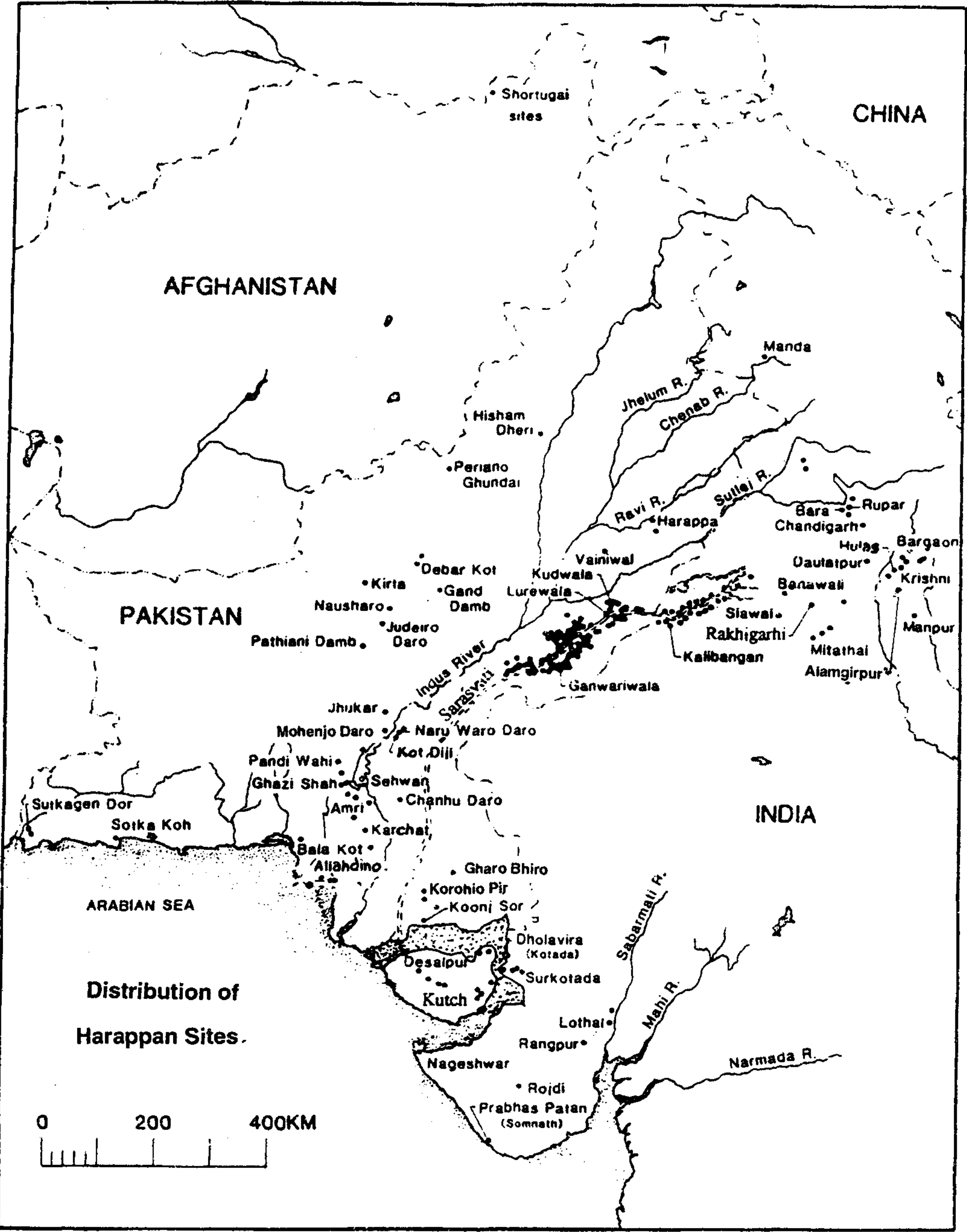
A good deal more has been learnt about the civilization since that discovery. We now know that the so-called Indus civilization

stretched over a vast area covering a million square miles, making it by far the most extensive in the ancient world. We also know now that the Indus people traded with others like the Sumerians in Mesopotamia. Recently, seals and other artifacts from the Indus civilization have also been found in the former Soviet Central Asian republics such as Turkmenistan. Discoveries at the port of Lothal excavated by the well-known marine archaeologist Dr. S.R. Rao attest to their maritime prowess also.

When these archaeological discoveries were beginning to be made, the Aryan invasion theory had been established among linguists for nearly a century. They immediately seized upon these findings, claiming the ruins as further evidence for the Aryan invasion. 'Indra stands accused!' exclaimed Mortimer Wheeler, meaning that the ruins had been caused by the depredations of the invading Aryans led by their God Indra. Wheeler happened to possess a theatrical personality and a dramatic style, and his histrionics and statements were imitated by his impressionable young subordinates. He himself later admitted that people took his statements much more seriously than he really meant. This I am afraid is how history is created.

It was also claimed that the original inhabitants of the civilization were Dravidians who were expelled by the invading Aryans. Since Harappan sites contain many seals with writing upon them, it has been claimed that the language of these writings must therefore be Dravidian, related to modern languages like Tamil. But attempts at deciphering the script based on that assumption, such as those by the late Father Heras, have failed completely.

Thus, despite the claim of linguists, there is no solid evidence to show that the language of the Indus people was



Archaeological Map of Vedic India. Note the concentration of sites along the Sarasvati

Dravidian. Then there is also the fact that the classification of languages into 'Aryan' and 'Dravidian' is a modern academic concept that may or may not correspond to the historical reality of thousands of years ago. There is no evidence of the existence of any so-called Dravidian language for more than two thousand years, while most of the Indus seals are over four thousand years old. This leaves a gap of two thousand years! Further, as every Indian knows, all Indian languages are heavily influenced by Sanskrit, and in fact can be derived from it. Notwithstanding such reservations, the Aryan invasion as the cause of the fall of the Indus civilization is still the foundation of ancient Indian history to be found in most history books today.

Now thanks to the work of S.R. Rao in India and Subhash Kak in America and others, it increasingly looks like the language of the Harappan seals is related to Sanskrit. In a recent article, S.R. Rao and I have shown that it is possible to read many of the Harappan (Indus) seals using a Sanskritic and Vedic linguistic and cultural base. Now there is independent archaeological evidence showing that the Harappan civilization belonged to the Sutra period of the Vedic Age. This means that they came at the end of the Vedic Age, and the two civilizations—Vedic and Harappan—ended at the same time. They were both part of the same Vedic civilization. We shall later learn that their end was brought about shortly after 2000 BC by a global ecological calamity.

To return to the current version of history, the most important consequence of the Aryan invasion theory is that it requires the composition of Vedic literature, especially of the *Rig-Veda*, to be placed after the end of the Indus civilization. This is an inescapable fact for anyone accepting the Aryan invasion version of history. In recent years, as a result of investigations by scholars from a wide range of disciplines such as archaeol-

ogy, ancient mathematics, computer science and astronomy, serious questions are beginning to be raised about the Aryan invasion, and in fact, about the whole interpretation of the Indus civilization as pre-Vedic. We can take a brief look at some of these issues, beginning with an examination of archaeology and the *Rig-Veda*, particularly at what they have to say about the Sarasvati river. This dramatically establishes the invasion to be a fiction.

We are now used to regarding the Ganga (Ganges) as the sacred river; but in Vedic times the holiest of rivers was the Sarasvati running to the east of the present day Punjab but west of the Ganga and the Yamuna. The *Rig-Veda* lauds the Sarasvati as the holy mother as seen in the following passage:

Sarasvati, the best of mothers, the best of rivers, the best goddess ...

—*Rig-Veda*, II.41.16

And there are many more such references scattered throughout the *Rig-Veda*. In recent years, extensive research by archaeologists has shown that the focus of the Indus civilization lay not along the Indus, but along the now dry Sarasvati. (See map on p. 535.) A recent count shows more than a thousand settlements, most of them along the Sarasvati, thereby confirming Vedic accounts. In an extensive investigation stretching over several years, the late Dr. V.S. Wakankar, assisted by a team of experts from several disciplines, showed that the Sarasvati changed its course several times, finally drying up completely around 1900 BC or a little before. The main cause of this was the loss of its two principal tributaries—the Yamuna and the Sutlej—the first to the Ganga and the other to the Indus. The focus of the Aryan civilization then shifted east to the Ganga which now became the holiest of rivers. Political supremacy also passed from

the Bharatas of the Sarasvati heartland to Magadha in the east.

All of these developments are noted in the late Vedic and post-Vedic literature such as the Brahmanas and the Puranas. The Sarasvati was once a great river, exactly as described in the *Rig-Veda*. It was the lifeblood of the Indus civilization for which reason it should be called Indus-Sarasvati civilization. These archaeological findings are now confirmed by photographs taken by the American earth sensing satellite Landsat, and more recently, also by the French satellite SPOT.

This shows that the Sarasvati river described in such great detail in the Vedas, and worshipped as the holiest of rivers had dried up completely by 1900 BC. This raises two fundamental questions about the Aryan invasion. First, since the Sarasvati dried up around 1900 BC, how could the authors of the *Rig-Veda* describe the river as it was then, coming into India nearly 500 years later? Even more puzzling, why did they set up the majority of their settlements along this dry river, and that too after crossing six great rivers—the Indus and its five tributaries?

The verdict of archaeology is therefore clear and unambiguous: the *Rig-Veda* describes India as it was before the drying up of the Sarasvati, when it was still a flourishing river and a vital source. The Indus civilization, the name given to the vast civilization stretching over a million square miles, was in reality Vedic Aryan. So both the Aryan invasion and the Aryan-Dravidian conflicts are pure fiction.

Nor is this the whole story. Quite apart from the evidence of the Sarasvati, it is now clear that the sites of the Indus Valley such as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were part of the Aryan fold. To take just one example, the so-called Harappan sites from the borders of Iran to East UP have revealed *yajnashtalas* or Vedic sacrificial sites that serve to show they were followers of the Vedic sacrificial religion. The design and construction of altars can be found described in Vedic texts known as the *Shulba-sutras*. These are mathematical texts—the oldest in the world—that contain very detailed directions for building Vedic altars. So the Aryan invasion theory leads us to the absurd conclusion that the construction of altars was done by the natives of the Harappan civilization, whereas the *instruc-*

*Metallic relic known as
Vasistha's Head*



tions for building them were brought by the invading Aryans! Science cannot explain or accept such preposterous contradictions found in our history books.

Then there is the famous discovery of a metallic relic known as Vasistha's Head. During a trip to India in 1958, a young American collector from San Francisco, named Harry Hicks, acquired a beautifully crafted metallic Vedic Aryan head (see photograph on p. 537) near Delhi, just saving it from being melted down as scrap. Over the next thirty years, Hicks and the American physicist Dr. Robert Anderson, subjected it to a series of scientific tests in nuclear physics laboratories in America and Switzerland in an effort to determine its date. To their great surprise it was found to have been cast around 3700 BC, i.e., more than 2000 years before the Aryans were supposed to have invaded India! More interestingly, the Head answers to the description of the famous sage Vasistha given in the *Rig-Veda*!

Vasistha, the most famous of the Rig-Vedic rishis is best known as the seer of the seventh book of the *Rig-Veda*. He was the chief priest and advisor to the Vedic King Sudas who defeated a confederacy of ten princes in what is described in the *Rig-Veda* as *Dasharajna* or the Battle of Ten Kings. On literary, historical, metallurgical and astronomical grounds this battle can now be dated to 3730 BC, which is also in agreement with the scientifically determined date for the casting. One may dispute its identification as Vasistha's likeness, but its ancient date determined by the latest techniques in the best laboratories in America and Europe are not in dispute. Its existence alone is sufficient to show that the Vedic Aryans must have been in India no later than 4000 BC, well before the time of the so-called Indus Valley civilization. This date for the presence of the Vedic Aryans in India is confirmed by astronomical statements in the

Vedic literature.

Thus, on the basis of evidence from archaeology, mathematics, astronomy and metallurgy it is now clear that the Aryans must have been firmly established in India by 4000 BC. By then they were already an advanced civilization. The Indus Valley civilization came *after* the Vedic Age, and was in fact a continuation of it in a somewhat degraded form—at least in a spiritual sense. So the Dravidians were part of the Vedic culture and the Aryan-Dravidian conflicts are a modern day myth that has served only to divide the people. But most significantly for the history of the world, this means that the Age of the *Rig-Veda* was a civilization before the rise of the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley. This calls for a complete revision of our idea of Mesopotamia as the cradle of civilization.

This being the situation, how are we to account for the persistence of the present version of history based on the Aryan invasion for more than a century? First point is of course that nineteenth century Europeans for the most part knew no science at all as we have seen in the case of Max Müller—the greatest of them—with his Biblical superstitions. But there was a more fundamental reason: it was never the real intent of colonial authorities to discover the truth about ancient history. They were not being paid to make discoveries about the past. Their interest lay in using it to serve their own political, commercial and missionary ends. Then there was the influence of German nationalism and race prejudices. As a consequence it was influenced more by European political and economic interests than anything that science or Indian records might have had to say. We can take a look at this amazing story in the next section.

(to be continued)

Review Article

THE LOVE INSIDE

DAUGHTERS OF THE OCEAN: DISCOVERING THE GODDESS WITHIN: By Shobita Punja; publ. Viking Penguin India, Penguin Book (I) Pvt. Ltd., 210 Chiranjib Tower, 43 Nehru Place, New Delhi 110 019; 1996; Rs. 300/-

I have to say that this is a remarkable book, one of the few I've read recently which makes you want to reread it immediately. This is not because it's impenetrable without a second reading, but because it's so packed with images and ideas that you feel like drinking them in more deeply.

These images and ideas concern eternal truths which, like Ganges water, never go stale and can bear endless repetition.

But their attraction also lies in the storytelling talent of the author and the honesty with which she tries to get to the bottom of things. Shobita Punja doesn't write to be clever or to impress, she writes from conviction. What she has found is a watery world of myth very relevant to our own modern lives. *Daughters of the Ocean* is an invitation to plunge in with her.

Punja delights in playing with simile and metaphor, and she extracts many meanings from rivers and oceans. Many goddesses are also rivers. The ocean can be the primordial soup from which life originally emerged, and the white ocean churned by gods and demons, an ocean of limitless potential from which Lakshmi emerged. And then it is also the world of oneness and reality behind the distractions of our modern life.

Equilibrium in our modern and profoundly unbalanced world, argues Punja,

come from realizing the goddess within—hence the title of the book.

The forms of the goddess Punja has chosen are Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Durga, Sita, Sati, Uma and Parvati—from which you can gather that Shiva's spouse is her favourite. At the beginning of each chapter she briefly recounts the myth, or the portion of it which she wishes to consider. Then she begins her discourse, examining the story, and wandering into the delightful, small digressions which support her main themes.

Punja has been a teacher for many years, but she doesn't talk down to us. She states very clearly that she doesn't want to be didactic but is herself obviously on the side of the action, of making the most of oneself. She emphasizes that the goddesses are personifications of Shakti and she stresses that Shakti means the ability to do. The divine is within us, by doing we can reveal it.

Punja is also a scholar. But these are not tales told with the passionless precision of an academic. Her arguments are full of passion and humour. There's quite a bit to laugh about in the myths, and the substories like the Jataka tales which she uses to support them. Play and humour are an essential part of wisdom and creativity, in short of Sarasvati, she reminds us.

Passion comes to the fore when she turns from the micro to the macrocosm, for example in her consideration of Sita. The Sita of Tulsi Das, Ramanand Sagar or the Ayodhya dispute doesn't get much of a look here. Sita here is the daughter of the furrow, the personification of the fertility of the earth.

When she marries Rama all creation responds with rapture. When she is

abducted, the whole of nature is stricken. Sita, says Punja, has disappeared today. Ravan reigns. He is handsome, well educated and very powerful. He is you and me, the ruling elite and the middle classes here and abroad. Punja's discussion of Sita is a powerful argument for environmentalism.

Punja is also a woman and a mother. A great deal of feminine sensitivity is expressed in this book which she says she has written for the sole pleasure of communicating with her young daughter. But if that's all she wanted to do, she could just as easily have written the manuscript and kept it in her '*almari*'. The urge is to communicate wider than she admits. For instance, her child is only four, but the chapter dedicated to Lakshmi relates to experiences we have much later in life.

In it she tells the story of the churning of the ocean and the reemergence of the goddess after creation, in the form of a '*parijata*' flower. She talks about the time our personal world collapses through some small or large event—disaster, tragedy, rejection, betrayal—when we are pulled down into a whirlpool of despondency and despair. Although we, like the goddess Lakshmi, are all daughters of the white ocean of limitless potential, the ocean is within us too. In times of despair, she urges us to churn the ocean within us to restore our universe to balance, and when the poison—of remembered failures and lost opportunities and self pity—appears from that churning, she says we must be careful not to drink it but to give it to Shiva.

Water, Punja points out always finds its natural level. But to reestablish this equilibrium, this subtle force which is the goddess within, does not mean accepting convention, or living your life always to please others. You have, for example, to stand up for truth. For Punja, the myth of Sati is about truth's protest against ostracisation, segregation and discrimination. Daksha's sacrifice is the world, to which everything which



inhabits this planet, has a right: Sati's immolation as a protest against exclusion, and Shiva's grief at the death of truth which Sati personified.

The book is not an autobiography, and yet it has many autobiographical touches. Their excuse for being there could be that the author is addressing her daughter, but they also help make the reader and author one—it's easy to respond to someone who can laugh at herself. After all, we've all been idiots and we've all suffered, and we all have to find something beyond that.

The author admits that until she was 35 she thought love was the answer to everything and reminds us that Hindu texts stress the importance of wisdom. But one of the lessons communicated by this book of goddesses—a lesson which when we apply to ourselves we shall naturally apply to the world—is that wisdom is nothing but love in the widest sense.

—Gillian Wright, *The Telegraph*, Calcutta

Spirituality and the Women's Movement

CAROL FLINDERS

The following is a transcript of a talk indeed very thoughtful and earnest; one that women in particular might find enlightening. For, as Carol Flinders says: 'My own feminism has been strengthened, enriched and clarified by these encounters (with the lives of people such as Clare of Assisi, Julian of Norwich)... I want to tell you something about these women by way of suggesting that today's women's movement can quite likely regain much of its momentum, its authority, its strength when it re-connects with its spiritual roots and core.' The talk is all the more stirring because of the way it draws inspiration from the ideal of soul-force behind Mahatma Gandhi's satyāgraha, and because it reminds us of Swami Vivekananda's vision that Sri Sarada Devi shall be the ideal for the women of the coming generations.

Carol Flinders too was one of the guest speakers at the Ahimsa Conference which we referred to in our introductory note under 'Religion and Diversity' in the PB July '96 issue.

When Professor Mehta and I first spoke about my coming here today, I suggested that the title for my talk might be something like 'Truth-Force and Social Change—What's Gender Got to Do with It?' We opted for a less cheeky title alternatively. But I want to revert to that for just a moment because I want to talk about *satyāgraha* since it is the eve of Gandhiji's birthday. I want that concept of satyagraha to serve as a kind of backdrop and reference point for everything I'm going to be saying.

The word satyagraha was the result of a contest. Gandhi was in South Africa at that time, and he wanted a word for the new political method that he had brought into being. So he offered a reward for the best single term to describe that. It was won, I think, by a nephew of his, Madan Mohan Gandhi, who came up with a word, a compound word, made up of two: *satya* and *āgraha*. *Satya*, coming from the word *sat*—that which is. Very simple. And *āgraha*—having an idea of obstinately clinging to, holding on, and persevering. So a satyagrahi is someone who digs in; who throws his or her weight solidly behind truth, or whatever

they perceive to be the truth. Now truth in this sense has a very special meaning.

Going back to the Upanishads, the idea is that what is eternal is the truth, that all of life is one, that the Deity we find out there is one and the same with the Self within. That understanding permeated all of Gandhi's political work. Satyagraha was not just the name for a political tool, or method, it was a whole way of looking at life. He reasoned that you could not really be a satyagrahi unless you underwent or undertook spiritual disciplines. He said in fact of the perfect satyagrahi: 'There comes a time when an individual becomes irresistible and her action becomes all-pervasive in its effects. This comes when she reduces herself to zero.'

This is precisely the term that is used in Christian mysticism—'self-naughting'—and it has to do with undergoing all the disciplines involved in training the senses, training the mind, so that you can see that truth—that all life is one, clearly and at all times, without any distortions from ego or self-will. Satyagraha then is truly soul-force.

The beauty of satyagraha in its wonderful relevance for today, is that it allows the

individual to be fully and thoroughly religious without confining oneself to any particular religious tradition. Gandhi was breathtakingly liberal. Religions are different roles converging at the same point. In reality there are as many religions as there are individuals. For Gandhi politics was inseparable from religion. He said, in fact, 'My devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics, and I can say without the slightest hesitation that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.' He saw the God, the truth that he was searching for, in the face of every dispossessed Indian peasant. But he also saw the face of God in every Englishman too—in his adversaries, whether they were in South Africa or in India. The real adversary for Gandhi was never any individual or any class of individuals, rather it was untruth—*asat*; it was exploitation and the idea that it was appropriate for any person or class of people to exploit another.

I've spent the last four years immersed in the study of lives of women so remote from Berkeley [California] 1993, that often I have felt like I was engaged in a kind of rescue operation—a kind of raid to release hostages. It's almost like the princess in the glass—no—Snow White in the glass casket, or the Sleeping Beauty behind the towering hedge of thorns. The hedge was greatly removed by time and place, but also it was simply the eccentricities of the medieval monastic Catholicism that shaped most of their lives.

I was drawn to these women by very strong personal desire initially. As so many people in my generation, when I reached the point in my early twenties of spiritual crisis and thirst, I turned to the East and found there the guidance that I required for taking up meditation. Years later, though, in my late forties, wanting not just to make peace with my own western roots, but also with the idea that I could be drawing upon them

with greater understanding that comes with the years, I really felt forced to come to terms then with all that strangeness.

These women I'm now talking about—people like Clare of Assisi, Julian of Norwich, Mathilde of Monteford—these women have been, by and large, passed over by most contemporary feminist writings because they seem to be locked into structures that are patriarchal, oppressive and limiting; and one has to acknowledge that that is true. But when you begin to look closer, the question becomes not so much why they were living and working within those structures, but what were they doing in there? And when you look at that level with a little understanding of what was going on, you begin to see that in fact they were subverting quietly. They were performing quiet acts of resistance of all kinds on the theological level and on the organizational or community-forming level—all kinds of things. They were, in fact, real satyagrahis.

It's remarkable to find out that these women are no better known to Catholics by and large than to the rest of us. Ask them about Catherine of Sienna and you find that they can't remember which of the four Cathelines we might be talking about; which Theresa was it? and so on. They are usually presented as models of purity and virtue and as somebody that, if you are a good Catholic, you can ask to interceded for you. But in fact when you look more closely you find out that these are down-to-earth women. They are diverse, they are courageous, disruptive, they are funny, they are passionate. They were not merely brides of Christ, pale and silent and passive—not at all. They were full-fledged seekers after their own identity—in just exactly the way Justice Campbell describes. Catherine of Genoa was speaking for all of them when she said ecstatically 'My knee is God!'

The key of course is to see them in context, and we can do that now—to a degree. We just couldn't, twenty years ago

even. There have been so many achievements in the field of medieval studies. For example, now you discover that they are not merely spiritually meaningful, but politically meaningful as well. In short, just as the seeker-me was nourished by this exposure, so was the feminist in me. My own feminism has been strengthened, enriched and clarified by these encounters. We were so short-sighted historically—we have to be reminded all the time that the women's movement did not begin in 1971. And that it didn't even begin in the nineteenth century in this country either. That this has been percolating away for hundreds and hundreds of years. It is not often recognized that these women often have a contribution to make to that. I want to tell you something about these women by way of suggesting that today's women's movement can quite likely regain much of its momentum, its authority, its strength when it re-connects with its spiritual roots and core.

I begin with Clare of Assisi. Clare is the classic psychic—the little blonde. She is not treated very seriously in most contemporary accounts. She is—but in a way that does not really give us a sense of the whole scope of her life. She was, it turns out, recognized in her time as the foremost of Francis of Assisi's disciples. She was the one who grasped more than any other individual, apparently, what this commitment to absolute poverty was all about. That—really the emptying of all personal attachments that she lived out, created that 'vacuum' of which Meister Eckhart talks about, within which God-Truth can flow.

She was also the very first woman to write a monastic rule. She struggled all her life, outliving Francis by twenty-seven years; and during most of that time the authorities kept trying to get her to adopt a variant of the Benedictine rule for her convents. She was a very magnetic woman indeed, a perfect example of what Gandhi was talking about in terms of (one's) having that

incredible irresistible quality. So, very soon, when she was eighteen, he set her up in a convent. And within a few years there were something like thirty of these household-convents within Umbray (Italy) alone.

She resisted, year after year after year, as one order after another, one rule after another was offered to her. Quietly, not making a big fuss (she would say), No, this isn't right, this isn't right. Part of her reason (for refusing) was because these orders did not recognize the validity of the complete poverty that she sought. When you are in a Benedictine Order, for example, you might have personal poverty, but the institution itself had large land holdings, which permitted them to have a winery, a bakery, and so on; and then in turn to offer charity to guests

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of the 'second sort'. What she sought was an absolutely reckless kind of poverty where the sisters would simply depend on the work of their own hands and whatever alms happened to come their way.

This represented an embarrassment to the male hierarchy. They worried about the 'well-being' of these young women. But also it was a challenge to the nature of their own commitment too. So they resisted and resisted. Finally on her deathbed she won Papal Confirmation for the rule that she had written herself. And it is a magnificent thing. We can read them side by side—and when you do (compare) the rule, for example, Pope Innocent wanted her to adopt (and) the rule that she did finally get guaranteed, (you see that) his is all about restrictions—wanting to enunciate the harshness of the life to which they were called: cover this, cover that, make sure there is a light burning at

night in the dormitory, the priors can see everybody's beds—and so on. Duller, definitely duller.

Hers, on the other hand, is pervaded with joy, with trust. She recommends a set-up within the community that is very democratic. She says that, basically, since the Holy Spirit called these women together in the

up, and keep them quiet. However, Theresa's reform grew out of her own experience as a young nun with a fragile vocation for herself, living in a convent which was little more than a sieve.

The convent there in Avila—the Convent of the Incarnation where she went as a twenty year old girl—had about two hun-

She recommends a set-up within the community that is very democratic. She says that, basically, since the Holy Spirit called these women together in the first place, we can presume that the Holy Spirit would still be working through them, and would guide them in their judgements and choices. There's a joyousness and a sense of deep true vocation that pervades this document. What's very interesting is that it reflects in its insistence on connectedness, on open communication and on non-hierarchical relationships.

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Theresa of Avila: On the face of it—if you saw the note in the encyclopedia—you would think her big achievement was to win reform of the Carmelite Order, so that nuns following that Order could have complete enclosure. There would be veils, their would be grills, and the nuns wouldn't go out. On the face of it, this looks like simply an echo of those old oppressive paternalistic structures: keep them inside, keep them covered

dred women in it, including servants. There was no permanent enclosure. Young women were encouraged to come and go, visit families and friends, because the convent was poor enough that it helped to have somebody not to be at the table regularly. And every afternoon the gentlemen of the town would come and visit the parlour. It was open house—kind of at-home! And so Theresa and the other sisters would entertain for hours on end.

Basically the place was set up for the convenience of the city-dwellers themselves—the wealthy people. They could send their superfluous daughters there, and of an afternoon you could go and flirt with somebody else's superfluous daughter; and quite often these superfluous daughters had to be sent home again—pregnancy and so on. They did not even have a real (monastic environment)—they didn't have instructions in mental prayer at all. The only form of prayer that they were taught was vocal prayer. And those vocal prayers were also (of the sort) where the community gave donations and so on to the convent with the understanding that the nuns would pray for their ancestors. So, for example, we have the

will of one gentleman in Avila who asked that in exchange for the handsome altar he was donating, for the next thirty years there would be a nun, on her knees, twenty-four hours a day, reciting prayers aloud—and it had to be aloud because they wouldn't know for sure that she was doing it. So a young woman coming into this convent with a genuine yearning to turn inward didn't have a chance.

Theresa struggled in this atmosphere for twenty years, and finally, because she had help in establishing herself in mental prayer, at last she had the breakthrough she

She (Theresa of Avila) spent the next twenty years, ...setting up convents where young girls could have that enclosure, the protection, they needed to seek and develop an interior life—to begin to hear that still small voice that is the beginning of every mystic's life.

needed to move inward, to get in touch with that deeper self, and then to turn around and launch this reform. She spent the next twenty years, from the time she was about forty-three until she was about sixty-two, travelling all over Spain, setting up convents where young girls could have that enclosure, the protection, they needed to seek and develop an interior life—to begin to hear that still small voice that is the beginning of every mystic's life.

So, you see, it's not what it appears. Julian of Norwich, for example, had no politically active life at all. And you think of Julian of Norwich's life as 'enclosed'. She never left the little cell attached to the church. Well, again historians have been very helpful. They've shown us that what really happened within an anchorite's cell is that actually there was a room—or probably two rooms—that were relatively comfortable; you probably had a maidservant and a cat to keep the mice away, and you had a window to which anybody in the town who

was troubled could come and get counsel and spiritual advice. So this was actually the function that Julian of Norwich served during her years of enclosure—intimate interaction with the people of the community.

In her second year she published two editions of her visions, her revelations. In the second much longer version, she develops a teaching on sin and forgiveness that is quite original and a real challenge to the dominant theology of the day. And you realize that this has grown out of her contact with troubled individuals. Basically what she says is that in her visions she has seen no evidence of a wrathful God; no evidence that we need to think we desperately require His forgiveness. Rather what she sees is that we are Selves; are grieved at our own shortcomings; and that we throw or project onto this magnificence and beauty that which we sense within ourselves, wrath and anger. It is a very liberating beautiful book (reminiscent) of those lines that T.S. Eliot quotes from Julian's—All will be well, all things shall be well, all men and things will be well—a message of profound hope and optimism. She also found her experience of God.

All these women are operating out of their experience—that satyagraha thing—, pursuing their experiments with truth and they are making their own discoveries. And they are true to those discoveries, even when it puts them in dangerous positions. Julian experienced that Christ was so tender and so warm and so loving that the only way she could adequately describe him was as our mother. And she goes on at great beautiful length itemizing the ways in which she's experienced that the Trinity includes motherhood—that femininity is part of the Godhead.

One after another, what you find is that these women challenged the dominant ideas of their time and brought a wealth out of themselves. They were incredibly (versatile), they were teachers, they were healers, brilliant writers as well.

I have suggested that the Women's movement could and can, and ought to think about drawing upon all of this richness. To characterize the status of this movement right now is very difficult to do for several reasons. One is that (the time) is premature. We are so close in the midst of it all that we tend to take our temperature

drawing upon those deeper depths. There are some wonderful stories to tell you: how the beautiful princess happened to end up with five husbands. I have not really time for that. But the story that India loves about Draupadi has to do with the occasion when Yudhishtira, the eldest of her five husbands (all brothers), and Duryodhana and

...what she (Julian of Norwich) says is that in her visions she has seen no evidence of a wrathful God; no evidence that we need to think we desperately require His forgiveness. Rather what she sees is that we are Selves; ...Julian experienced that Christ was so tender and so warm and so loving that the only way she could adequately describe him was as our mother. And she goes on at great beautiful length itemizing the ways in which she's experienced that the Trinity includes motherhood—that femininity is part of the Godhead.

every ten minutes. And every time there is a sign of dissension, we worry. And of course the media—we are so vulnerable to the distortions of the media who love to find any evidence of controversy among women.

What is clear though is that there is a certain amount of discouragement in that the very legitimate and reasonable goals of women today have *not* been realized. Susan Faluti, at the end of the backlash, asked: Why are not women using the power that they do have? Why this inertia? And certainly we are very far from the description of a world and culture that we receive from one of the Upanishads (*Mahabharata*?) thousands of years ago. I think it mentions that, that state is well governed in which a woman could walk at night fully adorned with all her jewels and silks, unaccompanied by a man, in any street and in any by-way. Even on the score of simple safety, let alone the sense of well-being and respect and so on that goes with that, we are far behind.

To answer that question about women's power, I think it might be useful to look at a very different kind of vision of what women's power can be—particularly since I'm talking in the context of women

his brothers—all cousins of the other members of the dynastic family who have challenged the right of the Pandavas to inherit their own kingdom—agreed that they were going to settle the dispute by a dicing game. Unfortunately Yudhishtira's one flaw is a weakness for gambling.

And so this terrible scene takes place in the palace—in the court. And Yudhishtira does not—just cannot—stop the game. He loses his kingdom, loses his armies, he loses his brothers, he loses himself. And worst of all, he can't stop (even at this point). And when his cousins will now gamble for Draupadi—he agrees to do that. Well, of course, the man he is dicing with is a cheater and he loses the toss. And so there's the scene when Draupadi, the beautiful, brilliantly intelligent, accomplished princess, is seized by Duhshasana (one of the cousins). Rudely, crudely he grabs at her and tries to tear her sari off her as a gesture of his possession. Draupadi, whom we already know early in the story is a tremendous devotee of Sri Krishna, calls out in agony and humiliation and rage: 'Krishna!' You see, there is a sort of in-set—this is handled very deftly in ballet and theatre and film—where Krishna is sitting with his consort up in the clouds

playing his flute and he is glancing down, but he is not paying a whole lot of attention. And his wife says to him, 'Look! Look at her—she's in trouble—immediately go to her.' And he looks down and says, 'But look, she's still holding on. She's holding on to the sari with all her might.' Just at that instant, as if by telepathy, she lets go and she calls out once again: 'Krishna.' And this time, because she is letting go completely of any human means and throwing herself completely on this deeper power from within, what has been a desperate struggle becomes a dance of joy, because as she swirls and turns around the room, the sari unwinds and unwinds and unwinds, until you realize that there's no end to this sari. And pretty soon Duhshasana is pulling and pulling on this immense pile of silk around his feet. And he falls down defeated at last.

In other words, the satyagrahi, the person who holds onto truth, paradoxically is also the person who has that capacity to let go and to let that other force come through. What would the women's movement look like if it were to take up that challenge—if it were to look towards Gandhi? Not as a template, because Gandhi himself, everything he did, was vernacular, experimental, geared to one time, one place, and one situation. And so, I think, in that spirit women would—for example—never mistake any one individual or class for an adversary. Rather the very idea that anybody or any group could impose itself on another would be the adversary—the idea of power and privilege. Deeper still, perhaps materialism itself, and greed and competitiveness that give it rise (would be the only adversary).

We would recognize that the struggle is not merely for women's rights, but for the whole range of human capacities, strengths and forms of expression that have been submerged along with women, and which all of us want back. It would be recognizing that everybody is victimized by exaggerated gender stereotyping. We could look to the

Theresa of Avilas and the Gandhis and the Francises and the Clares, to see that one can be tender *and* strong, intuitive *and* analytic, relational *and* charismatic.

This movement would be local and vernacular and diverse. It would be permeated with the sense of genuine self-sacrifice. We have in the last ten years understood the difference between genuine self-naughting and the compulsive self-abnegation that goes under the name of co-dependency. We would seek out silence. We would strengthen ourselves in silence, but we would be vociferous, vocal and loud in defence of justice. We would take up satyagraha, non-violence, not because it is the womanly thing to do, but because it is the supremely human thing to do.

We would look for the dawning of this new (epoch). Not new, of course—the spirit has been dormant there in women's movement all along. But we could look up to the stature of Gloria Steinham, publicly endorsing and embracing Mahatma Gandhi as a role model for American women! And that has happened just this past year. In Gloria Steinham's new book, she re-examines her original contention that the personal is political. Remember the idea that when we have deep personal troubles we should look to the political institutions that may be at the root of those. Now she has turned that on its head and said she's ready to think now about the possibility that the political is personal, and that political institutions will change in response to the deep changes we can make in ourselves. □

Knowledge leads to unity, and
ignorance to diversity.

—Sri Ramakrishna

Practical Vedanta

ACCOMPLISHED CHILDREN OF MOTHER-COW

...his (Swami Vivekananda's) preaching of Vedanta in the West had convinced him that all methods of raising the Motherland, such as politics, were but secondary to the need for her to cling to her scriptures and follow their injunctions. Afterwards the Swami conversed with a preacher of the Cow Protection Society. Their conversation, which is given below, brings out in bold relief the Swami's love for his fellow-men.

The Swami: What is the object of your Society?

Preacher: We protect mother-cows of our country from the hands of the butcher. Cow-infirmaries have been founded in some places where the diseased, decrepit mother-cows, or those bought from the butchers are provided for.

The Swami: That is very good indeed. What is the source of your income?

Preacher: The work of the Society is carried on only by gifts kindly made by great men like you.

The Swami: What amount of money have you now laid by?

Preacher: The Marwari traders' community are the chief supporters of this work. They have given a big amount for this good cause.

The Swami: A terrible famine has now broken out in Central India. The Indian Government has published a death-roll of nine lakhs of starved people. Has your Society done anything to render help in this time of famine?

Preacher: We do not help during famine or other distress. This Society has been established only for the protection of mother-cows.

The Swami: During a famine, when lakhs of people, your own brothers and sisters, have fallen into the jaws of death, you have not thought it your duty, though having the means, to help them in that terrible calamity with food!

Preacher: No. This famine broke out as a result of men's Karma, their sins. It is a case of 'like Karma like fruit'.

Hearing the words of the preacher, sparks of fire, as it were, gleamed in the Swami's large eyes; his face became flushed. But he suppressed his feelings and said: 'Those associations which do not feel sympathy for men and, even seeing their own brothers dying from starvation, do not give them a handful of rice to save their lives, while giving away piles of food to save birds and beasts, I have not the least sympathy for, and I do not believe that society derives any good from them. If you make a plea of Karma by saying that men die through their Karma, then it becomes a settled fact that it is useless to try or struggle for anything in this world; and your work for the protection of animals is no exception. With regard to your cause also, it can be said: the mother-cows through their own Karma fall into the hands of butchers and die, and we need not do anything in the matter.'

The Preacher was a little abashed and said: 'Yes, what you say is true, but the Shastras say that the cow is our mother.'

The Swami smilingly said: 'Yes, that the cow is our mother, I understand: who else could give birth to such accomplished children?'

The up-country preacher did not speak further on the subject; perhaps he could not understand the point of the Swami's poignant ridicule. He told Swamiji that he was begging something of him for the objects of the Society.

The Swami: I am a Sannyasi, a fakir. Where shall I find money enough to help you? But if ever I get money in my possession, I shall first spend that in the service of man. Man is first to be saved; he must be given food, education, and spirituality. If any money is left after attending to all these, then only will something be given to your society.

At these words the preacher went away, after saluting the Swami. Then the latter began to speak to us: 'What words, these, forsooth! He says that men are dying by reason of their Karma, so what avails it to do them any kindness? This is decisive proof that the country has gone to rack and ruin! Do you see how much the Karma theory of your Hinduism has been abused? Those who are men and yet have no feeling in the heart for man, well, are such to be counted men at all?' While speaking these words, the Swami's whole body seemed to shake with anguish and grief.

—*Life of Swami Vivekananda*
By His Eastern and Western Disciples
vol. 2, pp. 222-4

Reviews & Notices

DEVĪ-MĀHĀTMYAM: Tr. Swami Siddhinathananda; publ. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Munshi Sadan, Bombay 400 007; 1995; pp. 335; Rs. 200/-.

The *Devī-Māhātmyam*, known also as *Durgā-Saptasatī* or *Chandī*, which forms a part of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, is recited religiously by worshippers of the Divine Mother, especially in Bengal. It begins with the story of a king and a trader, both of whom coincidentally have been driven away from their respective homes. They wander in the wilderness and reach a serene Ashrama, yet continue to feel miserable thinking of their very kith and kin responsible for their sorrowful plight. Approaching sage Sumedhas, they seek to know the reason for their pitiable condition, and the sage recounts the glory of Mahāmāyā, the Great Enchantress, the Power of Brahman. She has two aspects: Seen as the Goddess, the Devī is the embodiment of both the liberating and the deluding power of Brahman, the *vidyāśakti* and *avidyāśakti*, respectively. The sage describes in allegoric form the Devī's three manifestations—*tāmasika*, *rājasika*, and *sāttvika*, and Her ultimate victory over all evil forces. He explains how, by propitiating Her, one can attain spiritual illumination or fulfilment of any worldly desire. The trader seeks the former, while the king asks only for restoration of his kingdom!

Swami Siddhinathananda, a venerable monk of the Ramakrishna Order, had rendered an old Malayalam commentary on *Devī-Māhātmyam* into modern Malayalam. The same has now been translated by him into English. The commentary is succinct and lucid. The Swamiji, however, could have avoided use of archaic forms of verbs such as *hadeṣṭ* and *woreṣṭ*, and instead used *had*, *wore*, and so on.

The verses are printed in *Devanāgarī* script, and the commentary provides both word-meaning as well as a complete comment. An index of the verses is provided at

the end for easy reference. The book would have been a more welcome addition to any personal collection, but for its rather prohibitive price. Since this is not a reference book, but one which would be used for frequent devotional recitation, the publishers could better have given a hard cover for the price quoted.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, Hyderabad

LIFE AND THOUGHT OF SANKAR-ACHARYA: By Govind Chandra Pande; publ. Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi, 110 007; 1994; pp. 384; Rs. 250/-.

From the vast erudition of Professor G.C. Pande emerges this definitive study of the life and thought of Sankaracharya, easily the most outstanding philosopher India (indeed, the world) has produced. Though traditional accounts abound, his 'historical biography is still a desideratum', rightly says Professor Pande. Spelling out his own aims, he says the book 'attempts to assess critically the present state of evidence on Sankaracharya in the context of perennial as well as contemporary questions. It attempts to reconstruct the life and thought of Sankara on historical principles, i.e., to determine the age and biography of Sankara and also his original ideas and writings within this framework'. In short, the book 'does seek to discover the original Sankara rather than rest content with the Sankara as interpreted by the medieval religious ethos and intellectual context'.

With this laudable aim Professor Pande gives us a comprehensive picture of the great 'philosopher's' life and thought. Within the exquisitely designed canvas of 13 chapters, he takes us through the sources of the History of Sankara and other temporal matters to the seminal philosophical significance of Sankara. Thus we have very balanced and comprehensive discussion of the different aspects of Sankara's magnificent

philosophy. Everywhere there is evidence of the author's ability to see biographical details in their relation to the 'evolution' of Sanakra's 'interior'—Advaita-landscape. Throughout we get an intersection of accurate detail and philosophic growth. In this regard the chapters on Sankara's philosophy and interpretation of the Vedanta, on Dharma, *naishkarmya* and *mukti*, and Sankhya and Yoga are extremely significant.

In short, this is an indispensable and enduring source-book for understanding the life and thought of the great Acharya.

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna, Hyderabad

THE VEDIC EXPERIENCE (MANTRA-MANJARI), An anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration: By Dr. Raimundo Panikkar; publ. Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007; Third Indian Edition; 1994; pp. xxxiv + 937; Rs. 375/-.

The Vedas (especially the *Rg-Veda*) are the earliest records of the spiritual experiences of mankind. They contain the primeval vision of Indian sages. Because of their deep, perennial and universal message, they are meaningful to people of all ages and places. It is desirable, nay, imperative, on our part to understand the true meaning of this most precious document of Vedic revelation. The revelation is, according to some, the product of the encounter of two cultures (the Aryan and the non-Aryan) in the second millennium BC. Its language is archaic (pre-grammatic) Sanskrit, and hence difficult to grasp by today's mind. Although the Vedic literature has been translated into English (by Max Müller) and other modern languages, because of its voluminous form it hardly attracts a common reader.

Dr. Raimundo Panikkar, a great student of Indian and Western spiritual traditions, well known around the globe for his book, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, currently Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, U.S.A., has done a great service to humanity by produc-

ing the volume under review. In this anthology he has collected the most crucial texts of the Vedic literature—in all more than five hundred pieces—and has translated them into modern English with introduction and notes. The title is called *Mantramañjarī*, a collection or bouquet of hymns. It is a cluster of blossoms, and denotes the meeting of the human and the divine (profane and the sacred) for the good of the secular man.

The volume contains the central message of the Vedas (four in number, namely, *Rg*, *Sāma*, *Atharva* and *Yajuh* and their four parts (i.e., *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*). The anthology is divided into seven parts (each part further divided into sections, sub-sections and chapters—the last ones containing the text proper) adopting the geological, historical and cultural patterns. Thus they are broadly grouped as (I) Dawn and Birth, (II) Germination and Growth, (III) Blossoming and Fullness, (IV) Fall and Decay, (V) Death and Dissolution, (VI) New Life and Freedom, and (VII) Twilight. All the parts have the editor's introduction and notes except the last one. The last part, like the ribbon that ties the bouquet, binds together all that has been said by him in the earlier parts and integrates them. It brings back, so to say, the living unity which the lustre of the individual sections may have overshadowed.

Each part of the volume is introduced by at least one *mantra* or antiphon and consists of two or more sections, which in turn have various sub-sections of several chapters. Each of them has been numbered for easy reference and provided with a double title, English and Sanskrit. There is an inbuilt order in the structure of every part. The main emphasis is on the text. The explanatory notes are meant neither to form a commentary nor any treatise, they simply help the texts so as to speak for themselves.

The collection is addressed to the modern man. By 'modern man' is meant here the average reader of contemporary Western language, having secular and trans-cultural settings. It should be noted here that the Vedic experience introduces nothing alien to modern man; it rather helps him realize his own being. In this sense the Vedas

occupy a privileged position in the crystalized culture of Man. They are, in the words of the editor, neither primitive nor modern. Not being primitive, they present a depth, a critical awareness, and a sophistication not shown by many other older cultures. Not being modern, they exhale a fragrance and present an appeal that the merely 'modern' man does not possess.

The translation of the texts is not word-by-word, as that is not possible in the strict sense. It simply tries to make the material intelligible to the reader. The aim is not 'translation' but 'representation' of the experience—the universal form of human celebration. The Vedic man is fundamentally a celebrating man. He concelebrates with the whole universe. The contemporary reader is invited to participate and celebrate. As the Vedic Epiphany belongs to the heritage of mankind, one feels at home while

celebrating and singing and meditating the Vedic spirituality.

The edition has a rich Sanskrit Glossary, Index of Texts and References, and a General Index. It is an excellent piece of combination of scholarship and meditation by a brilliant mind of our age. It would bring the minds of the East and the West closer, provide better understanding between the older world-views and today's *Weltanschauung*, and eliminate the sense of alienation in today's people. The last hymn of the *Rg-Veda-Saṁhitā* so clearly envisages this: '*Samāni va ākūtiḥ, samānā hrdayāni vah; samānam astu vo mano, yathā vah susahāsati*: May our resolve, hearts, and spirits be united and may we dwell together in unity and concord'.

Dr. S.P. Dubey, Jabalpur

Nanda, The Pariah Saint

(Continued from page 516)

it may be on the social plane, it has ever been liberal on the religious one. Many of the saints worshipped in our temples are men of the lower castes, some of them being of the very lowest; and the Brāhmin is as ready today as he was in the days of Nanda to fall at the feet of any man irrespective of caste, if any high religious merit be at least plausibly claimed. Nanda ran to his master, raised him up, repeatedly fell at his feet and with tears in his eyes said, 'My lord, what a sin have you committed by bowing to your *pariah* slave', to which the Brāhmin replied, 'You are no longer either a *pariah* or a slave, you the holiest of men, the greatest of *bhaktas*. Go to Chidambaram, but bless me before you go, forgive me for my treatment of you and recommend me to God's High Grace.' And saying this he took Nanda's hands, and placing them on his head implored him to give him some parting advice. 'This is all that

your humble slave could say my lord,' said Nanda, 'Love God as well as you love your wife, children, lands and wealth. What more, O lord, does this uncultured slave know?' The Brāhmin looked up at the radiant face of Nanda and, worshipping him once again, reluctantly let him go. With great many kindly expressions they parted.; But hardly had Nanda gone a few yards when the Brāhmin ran up to him and asked, 'Nanda, dear Nanda, O my guru, when may I see you back? When will you return?' Nanda replied, 'No, O my master, we part once for all. O my lord, who really goes to Chidambaram and comes back? I loathe again to enter into this mortal coil. My master, I hope no longer to return.' The Brāhmin did not understand what Nanda said, but we may perhaps do from the sequel to this narrative.

(to be continued)